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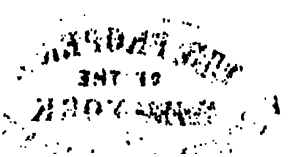

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From a painting by Albert R. Thayer

THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE

By
CAROLINE ATWATER MASON
Author of "A Lily of France," "The Spell of Italy," etc.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR BY
ALBERT R. THAYER

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F

THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE

I

"FINALLY, Beloved, you need not that I write unto you further concerning this grace of self-denial—"

"Self-denial."

The word was echoed with the colourless rising inflection of the amanuensis; the dictator on the other hand infused into each syllable of his own sentence a sympathetic emphasis. The dictation of his pastoral epistle by the Reverend Warner Tiffany proceeded for some moments unbroken; then suddenly the hand holding his manu-

scripts dropped, and Miss Motte waited in vain for a sentence.

"What do you think of this epistle any way, Miss Motte?" the clergyman asked with a whimsical smile.

"I have not thought anything about it, Dr. Tiffany."

Plainly Miss Motte, though greatly surprised by the question, was a young woman of self-possession. The room in which they sat at work was an official and semi-public study in the parish house of Calvary Church. The white light of the snowy March morning came in baldly through tall, unshaded windows,—a good light for clerical work, but a poor light for illusions or the softening of defects. Dr. Tiffany's assistant did not require this form of consideration. The texture of her fine brown skin, her well-kept hair, the charming freshness of her white blouse, asked no odds of the morning

light. As for Dr. Tiffany, the light served to bring out to admiration the impressive modelling of his features and the sensitive, cynical lines about his brow and lips. The clergyman's figure was imposing, his attitude careless yet full of a negligent and massive grace. He was beyond forty, but the hand which held his manuscript was the hand of a young man still.

A middle-aged woman came to the open doorway and stopped for a word of greeting. She wore a semi-official costume of dark blue and spoke with an air of businesslike decision.

"I am going to call on the Mackies, Dr. Tiffany. Would I better go down to the Point when I am in that neighbourhood and look after Katy Duffy a little? I hear that wretched father is drinking again."

"How many times has that man signed the pledge in my presence," re-

marked Dr. Tiffany, "and how many times has he hastened to break it with a promptness which would have made him a success in any other field of activity. At the close of a campaign, Miss Hill, Duffy is not always a Chesterfield. On the whole I advise your not going to the Point."

"Very well."

Miss Hill disappeared down the long corridor.

"You will have to look out for the Duffys, Miss Motte. Miss Hill is not the one. Please remember."

Dr. Tiffany's tone was direct now, peremptory even. Miss Motte assented quickly and turned back to her dictation.

"That Yokohama letter must go out in time to catch the Saturday steamer without fail. Have you written it?"

"Not yet, Dr. Tiffany." There was

one serious glance as of mute appeal from Miss Motte's eyes, then submissive silence.

"'Not yet,' because I keep you here wasting your time on the platitudes of my precious pastoral when you wish to be doing a thousand real things. Tell me I haven't read your rebellious brain aright, if you dare!"

Leaning back in his armchair, Dr. Tiffany gazed seriously, and yet half satirically at his assistant. Something in his look, something indefinable about him altogether this morning seemed to threaten the hitherto strictly cool neutrality of their business-like, official relation and disturbed the girl. Her colour deepened.

"I do not understand how you can speak like that of a thing which means so much to all the people," she said, with some inner trembling at her own boldness.

"My dear Miss Motte, there is no particular use in walking delicately around that pastoral of mine. All it really has to say is: — we are going to build a new church because a man called Warner Tiffany has decided that the location of the present one is unfashionable and the architecture not to his taste. You other fellows must produce the money. Down with the dust, gentlemen! The dollar mould is the mould in which you are asked to run your religion for the next two years. We shall call it, however, by a prettier name; self-denial suits a pastoral better and self-denial it shall be."

Miss Motte rose as he finished speaking and deliberately tore in strips the sheet she had been copying. Her eyes, which were dark and velvety and usually filled with a strange and haunting sadness, flashed with indignation.

Regarding her imperturbably, Dr. Tiffany shook his head and commented:

"You must learn to control your temper, Miss Motte. You shock me painfully."

"I have a right to be angry," she murmured, "when you turn all my gold to dust, when you make sacred things mean and high things cheap."

"Have I done that? Truly, have I hurt you, my girl? You should have been made of sterner stuff. You disappoint me. Is it possible that you prefer posing? that you cannot bear a man's honest nature? You are a romantic idealist like other girls, after all. Please sit down at your desk, however; I am not done yet, — look at the clock!"

Miss Motte hesitated, feeling more uneasy with every word. Then her hand was taken and she found herself drawn to a chair nearer to Dr. Tif-

fany's than her own. Her breath came quick and she turned away her head, striving to release the hand which he detained.

"Why pull so at thy chain? Let me have your hand just a minute in my great paw; it might turn me into an idealist too. Do not misunderstand: it is not a liberty I seek, but a right. That will be clear presently. But where did you ever get such a hand, useless little thing to look at yet with such an obstinate, industrious nature just under the surface? a veritable iron hand it is in a velvet glove. Very well — take it then! I am not for holding the glove if the hand resist me."

Miss Motte rose, but found Warner Tiffany, having risen too, confronting her with eyes full of a compelling tenderness, and of something distinctly beyond tenderness. Nevertheless his

voice was as unemotional as ever when he spoke.

"My child, has it ever occurred to you that you and I could do very well to be married to each other?"

"No, never."

"As I supposed. You have regarded me as your master. In point of fact I have for some time been your slave. You have tabulated me as a rather aged clergyman. In reality I am a man and not old at all, even in years, and a man who wholly loves you, Noelle."

"Dr. Tiffany, you must be mistaken." Miss Motte spoke with agitation, and her eyes were wide with alarm.

"No, I am not mistaken," he said gravely; "my mind has been made up for months. But I see you are not at all inclined toward marrying me."

"I am not at all inclined to marry

any one," the girl said earnestly. They were walking now the length of the great room towards the door of her own small office. "Long ago, Dr. Tiffany, I took a vow never to marry; I shall keep it—*always.*" The last word was spoken with slow, and even solemn emphasis.

He smiled indulgently, but the sadness in his face touched Miss Motte poignantly. After all, it seemed that he was in earnest, and some stir in her heart suggested that if Warner Tiffany were in earnest, he might be hard to resist.

"Do not let those adolescent vows have too much weight with you, Miss Motte," he said, with ironical gentleness. "We all make those mistakes when we are very young. Forget the question I have raised. I shall not trouble you again with it—at present;" with the words he looked stead-

ily into her face with something in his look which made her pulses quicken and brought tears to her eyes. "To-morrow we will do the pastoral."

"I think your new assistant would do that better," said Miss Motte, and smiled. "He will be here so soon now."

"Which is to say that you persist in your rebellion? Very well. What have you on hand this morning?"

"The letters, and my room to clear for Mr. Dane."

"Very true; you must do that. You will not be working here much longer, will you? But I shall count upon you as before for the parish work."

"You may, Dr. Tiffany."

II

LATE the following afternoon Miss Motte alighted from a carriage driven up before a stately house on Ridge Road, the aristocratic street of Pemberton. She was followed to the pillared portico by a beautiful woman wrapped in furs, beneath which a reception gown of delicate lace and satin could be seen. The woman was Mrs. Matthew O'Brien and the house was her home. She had a quantity of dry, bright bright hair rolled high from off her forehead and eyes of a topaz colour, full of subtle and changing lights. The two entered the great hall together and proceeded slowly up the shallow cushioned steps of the broad staircase.

Mrs. O'Brien knocked at a closed

door which was promptly opened by a young man. "How is he, Boyle?" she asked. "Can I bring Miss Motte in for a few minutes? She always does him good."

Boyle hesitated. "His head is pretty bad to-day, Mrs. O'Brien,—" he began, but was interrupted by a voice from within.

"Hello, Cornie! What's doing?"

"Can't we come in, Matt?" Mrs. O'Brien pushed the door wider open. Boyle stood aside. "I have just come from Elinor Bishop's kettledrum. It was a deadly bore, so I captured dear little Mottley and brought her home to cure your head by laying on of hands. Please let us in! We're great fun—full of malice, envy and all uncharitableness."

"If that's the case, come right in. You must have psychics enough to cure anything."

The room which they entered was of unusual size and peculiar equipment. Microscopes and various scientific instruments filled large tables; books and periodicals were piled high on all sides; in the midst stood an invalid chair with high back and arms which rendered almost invisible the person who occupied it. Appliances of diverse kinds surrounded the chair; movable racks, frames and shelves contrived to hold books and instruments at convenient points. Everything in the room, in fine, seemed to focus and centre in the person of the man in the invalid chair; a man whose face and body were wofully marred and whose limbs were hopelessly crippled. The only possessions left this man unspoiled were, it appeared, his firm, resonant voice, his keen intelligence, and the eyes through which it shone.

"Good afternoon, Miss Motte," he cried, as the girl followed Mrs. O'Brien to the place where he sat; "Hello, lady-love! What a charming bonnet! Pretty creature, isn't she, Miss Motte?"

"Don't talk about me, Matt; look at Noelle in this fine new tailor gown, made by her own hands if you please, every stitch of it. Is she the talented creature?"

"You have something marvellous in your hands, Miss Motte, for a fact. That costume has something about it beyond the dressmaker's art,—the consecrating touch which bends matter to the spirit's uses."

"How fine!" cried the girl. "I never dreamed I had all that."

"You know you can do anything with your hands, Noelle," said Mrs. O'Brien, drawing up a chair for her

friend as she spoke; "sew, cook, write —and cure headaches."

"Can you—?"

Mr. O'Brien asked the question with abruptness, a recurring paroxysm of pain showing in his eyes, his whole frame growing tense.

"Poor love!" cried his wife tenderly. "It has been an unmerciful day, I see."

Miss Motte had already laid aside her gloves. Standing behind his chair, she quietly laid her finger-tips on Matt's forehead, and proceeded to draw them with a slow, equable movement across the quivering temples.

There was a long silence in the dusky, fire-lighted room. Boyle had disappeared. Mrs. O'Brien watched Noelle's hands with wistful seriousness. Gradually the invalid's strained muscles relaxed, his hands dropped

from their clutch upon the arms of the chair. His wife nodded with the mist in her eyes shot through by a triumphant smile, then slipped away to a distant sofa where she curled down among a heap of cushions.

"You will be tired with standing so long." Matt spoke at last with dreamy slowness. "Sit down now. That is right. Put your fingers on my wrists if you will; the pulses are mutinous still."

Noelle pushed back the sleeves of the housecoat and drew her fingers slowly down the wrists which were deeply scarred to the tips of the sensitive, wasted fingers. The sight of those scars brought tears to her eyes, as it had before. They told again a story she could not recall unmoved. Ten years ago, long before she came to Pemberton, there had been a fire in the building in which Matthew O'Brien

had his chemical laboratory. In order to save a boy who was cleaning apparatus for him, he gave up his own chance to escape uninjured and was burned almost beyond recognition. At the time he had been married but a year, and with every advantage of wealth, position and intellectual promise had been accounted one of the most fortunate of men.

For a while the silence remained unbroken; Mrs. O'Brien in her far corner seemed asleep. Noelle found Matt's eyes resting steadily upon her; languor was taking the place in them of pain, but even so she knew their look penetrated deeper than the looks of other men.

"You were born in India, Miss Motte?"

The words had the effect of reflection rather than a question.

"Yes. In Mussoorie."

"Mussoorie! What a musical name as you speak it. You caress the syllables as if you loved each one."

"I do love the name though I cannot remember the place. It must be wonderful though — built on a peak of the Himalayas, you know."

"It suits you to have come down from some mysterious, inaccessible Himalayan height. It serves to account for that air of remote, inexplicable distinction which you bear about with you."

Noelle laughed softly.

"Imagine a Yankee girl like me describable in such sounding terms!"

"It would require a greater stretch of imagination to believe you a Yankee girl. No Yankee girl ever had a hand like yours, with the Oriental touch of magic and mystery in it, for which Allah be praised."

"All the same I am of New Eng-

land birth on my father's side. You have heard of him,—David Motte?"

"Certainly I have heard of your father. He accomplished a great work in that mission of his in India, in a short life. Did he die in this country? I forget."

"Yes, in his own village, in Maine. He brought us home, my mother and me, he supposed on furlough."

"That sounds as if he were a soldier."

"Yes, he was a soldier, like all his fellow-missioners, literally a soldier of the Cross, a knight crusader. So he counted not his life dear. . . . This is his likeness."

As Noelle spoke she detached a locket worn within her dress from its thin gold chain, opened it and handed it to Mr. O'Brien. He turned on a light under a green globe at his elbow

and sat silent for some moments studying the miniature.

"My mother painted it," Noelle said shyly, her face flushed with a tender, childlike pride.

The face was that of a man of thirty-five, with pale auburn hair and brilliant blue eyes, irregular features and lofty expression.

"Yes, it is the face of a soldier," said Matt at length very gently, "but essentially of the mystic also and the New England mystic. It is certainly very strange," and he handed back the locket.

"What is very strange?"

Mrs. O'Brien asked the question, crossing to take a footstool at her husband's feet. "That your headache is cured? Not strange at all for Noelle, though occult. To tell the truth I am a little afraid of you, Mottley, you are

land birth on my father's side. You have heard of him,—David Motte?"

"Certainly I have heard of your father. He accomplished a great work in that mission of his in India, in a short life. Did he die in this country? I forget."

"Yes, in his own village, in Maine. He brought us home, my mother and me, he supposed on furlough."

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As Noelle spoke she detached a locket worn within her dress from a thin gold chain, opened it and handed it to Mr. O'Brien. He turned the light under a green globe

such a wizard. Matt," with a quick change of tone, " do you know that Noelle is about giving up her work at Calvary Church with all its splendid emoluments,—three hundred a year, isn't it, my dear, and a chance to pray in six different languages?—and is to set up in business for herself? "

" Oh, if you please, Mrs. O'Brien," cried Noelle, her colour deepening, " I am not quite giving up my work at Calvary nor quite setting up in business for myself."

" Dear," said Matt coolly, " you are always charming and often inaccurate. No, don't protest. Let Miss Motte explain. She may after all be as well informed on the point as you. Go on, Miss Motte."

" It is simply," proceeded Noelle, " that your wife has been so good as to form classes for me in French and I am to grow so rich as to be able to

take a tiny house and send for my dear mother to live with me. This makes it difficult for me to assist Dr. Tiffany as I have been doing, in office work, but I am still to help among the French and Italian people of the parish."

"Of course Dr. Tiffany would not let you go altogether," commented Mrs. O'Brien. "He knows he will never find another church missionary who speaks so many languages and at the same time has a heart in her bosom. Whom is he to have now to help him in the office work?"

"The name is Dane, a young man from P——, I think. He is to do much more than I have ever done, you know, he will preach and help in everything. Dr. Tiffany will require so much help with the new church to be built."

"Oh, a curate, in fact," said Matt, as if not keenly interested in Dr. Tif-

fany's assistant. "And so your mother is coming to Pemberton, Miss Motte? I congratulate you. Will you not bring her sometime to see me?"

Miss Motte had risen to go.

"Oh, if I may!" she exclaimed joyfully. "You can't think how vain I am of her! She is French, Mr. O'Brien; perhaps I told you, but her English is very nice."

"It seems odd," remarked Mrs. O'Brien, "that an American missionary should marry a French lady, doesn't it?"

"Not odd when you know Maman," laughed Noelle. "My father met her in Agra. They fell in love—*voila!* It has happened often, I am told. Goodbye."

"A moment! Where are you to live?"

"On Gore Terrace, Number 78."

"Extremely pretentious I call that."

"Yes, but the house—it is a rabbit-hutch! It is not even *un*pretentious."

"No matter, Noelle, you will make it an earthly paradise," interposed Mrs. O'Brien.

"That is my intention."

III

NUMBER 78 Gore Terrace was an unpainted, low-roofed house once appurtenance of a farm whose boundaries had long since been obliterated. Among the modern dwellings of the street with their bays and balconies, plateglass windows and general air of architectural smartness, it showed pitiful and forlorn, an obstinate yet decaying little excrescence, mourned over by a few weatherbeaten apple-trees, veterans of a disbanded orchard.

On the first days of April the neighbours nearest to Number 78 saw with amazement that its doors and windows were thrown open, were washed and scoured, were decorated by dainty curtains and blossoming plants; in short,

that some incredibly shortsighted persons had dared to foredoom themselves to social oblivion by taking up their abode in the long untenanted cottage.

But greater amazement awaited the inhabitants of Gore Terrace when, on an afternoon at the end of the first week of April, the shining brougham and spirited horses of Mrs. Matthew O'Brien were seen standing for an hour before the lowly door of Number 78. Mrs. O'Brien herself appeared at length upon the door step, stood there for a protracted parting, gathered up her dainty skirts and stepped to her carriage, then having entered it, turned and waved a kiss from her finger-tips to a dark-haired girl who stood in the doorway. As the carriage rolled away the cottage door was closed and Gore Terrace had chance to recover itself and think the matter over.

Wholly oblivious to the scrutiny bent upon her humble dwelling and the excitement caused by her visitor, Noelle turned back to the work which the visit had interrupted. In spite of the absence of provision for anything but bare enclosure of space afforded by the house, the interior had already taken on atmosphere and charm. The walls were softly tinted, the floors covered with India matting and rugs; the sunny little parlour was crowded with books and pictures, pieces of Oriental bronze and pottery, and teakwood furniture. The dining-room beyond it, which with a tiny kitchen constituted the entire ground floor of the house, was furnished with quaint and carefully restored mahogany.

In this room, although the windows were open to the April air, a fire of broken orchard boughs crackled in a small fireplace; beside it sat a white-

haired woman in a graceful gown of clinging black, busily sewing brass rings upon a voluminous curtain of coarse-woven Eastern fabric.

"You make long adieux, Noelle. I have almost finished the curtain."

Mrs. Motte spoke in French with noticeable purity of accent; her small hands showed delicately white upon the rough surface of the drapery; her face and figure were fragile but distinguished, the eyes clear, blue-gray, and serious, the small head almost girlish in contour by reason of the fulness and inclination to curl of the thick white hair.

Noelle took the curtain from her mother's hand and looked down into her face, her own irradiated with joyous light.

"Am I happy, Maman? " she cried. "Have I a home? have I a mother who is an angel and my very own?

have I friends, gay and fine, to whom to show her off? And then is she mine to come back to and rest my heart's heart upon? Oh little Mère Angelique, your girl did need you!"

"Noelle, Noelle!"

Mrs. Motte drew the girl, who was crying happy tears, to a low seat at her side and pressed her head against her knee.

"Poor little one," she murmured softly; "she has been lonely and overworked. But now she shall carry alone no more burdens. Mother has come, Noelle."

Under the girl's breath came a sob, but it was cut through by a ripple of low laughter.

"It is joy that is crying," she said.

"And it is also fatigue," added her mother sedately. "You worked too hard, also the visit of your friend Mrs. O'Brien was very long. She is delight-

ful, but she claims your resources without cessation while she is with you. She is one to admire, but one who must be admired at every moment, else—!" Mrs. Motte broke off with a slight expressive gesture of her slender hands.

"She is dear, and she is doing everything for me here in Pemberton, Maman, but I begged her not to come until to-morrow and she should have obeyed. Then all would have been in order."

"My child, those who know you always follow you, whether you wish it or not. It is your fate to draw them, and it was so ever, even when you were a child in India. Your ayah preferred to die rather than be left behind when we left Agra; accordingly we were forced to trail her around Europe and you then a great girl of twelve. It was most inconvenient, having her die in London and all."

"Poor Soonderbai!"

"When she died, Noelle, I did not understand that we were coming under the law of death—I did not dream what was to follow when death once entered—" Mrs. Motte spoke low and rapidly, then her voice faltered and broke with a strange, dry sob. Noelle sprang to her feet, her face paling suddenly, but a smile on her lips.

"The emotional number having been rendered," she cried gaily, "we will now relax, have tea, loaf and invite our souls. We have been confined at hard labour too long. That horrid elk of a curtain with its brass horns shall not be hung until to-morrow although it deserves hanging this minute for tiring Maman. Won't you please get out the best Canton cups, while I hunt for that caddy of Dehra Dun tekoe. Where did you put it, love? In one of these drawers?"

Already Noelle was upon her knees before the mahogany secretary. Her mother rose and stood motionless for an instant save for a tremor which ran over her frame, then with a quick movement she turned to an antique cabinet from which she brought out a brass equipage for tea making. Her hands trembled and the faint colour in her cheeks had deepened perceptibly.

"Ah, here it is!" cried Noelle, exultantly, producing a beautiful lacquered caddy into which she peered anxiously. "The dear old thing—older than I, isn't it, Maman? And there is left in it quite half a pound of best tekoe. How fragrant it is! One whiff of that odour takes me to the Isthmus,—two, all the way home to Agra. Not a grain of it shall be wasted on any being who has not come from India or some other celestial region. These Occidentals don't know

flowery tekoe from oats-pease-beans-and-barley-grows, as you-and-I-and-nobody-knows! Don't let's waste it on them. Maman shall have a cup every Saturday afternoon when she's tried all the week to be good."

While the girl chattered on she was busy with a long handled spoon dipping a few leaves from the caddy and putting them into the transparent cups which Mrs. Motte had now placed upon the table. Not for an instant did her eyes fail to watch her mother's face with veiled but piercing eagerness.

"Now see you to the hot water, love," she cried with a long breath as of relief and took her place again on the hearth rug.

"You don't mind my tyrannizing over you, do you?" she ran on gaily. "That is what I brought you to Pemberton for chiefly, you know. When

you have been ordered about yourself right on steady for two years, bidden here and bidden there, scolded and praised as if you were a little monkey, the time comes when you have to get a chance at it yourself."

"Is Dr. Tiffany then a tyrant?" asked Mrs. Motte quietly, taking lumps of sugar from a curious old silver porringer with a pair of quaintly wrought and jewelled scissors. "I saw him but once, but I considered him most distinguished and amiable. He seemed to appreciate my girl."

Mrs. Motte spoke casually, all strain gone from her face and manner as she handed Noelle a cup of tea.

"Which was enough for Maman naturally. You can be flattered into any opinion by way of Noelle, can't you, dear? Oh, that bell with its tin-tin-tinny-tabulation!"

Noelle set down her cup, went to the

house door and came back with four letters in her hand. Three she handed to her mother; the seal of the other she broke with one motion of her swift brown hand, then read as follows:

"DEAR GIRL:—Stop a minute in your labours at turning a Christian cottage into a bit of heathendom and think of the perfectly worthy fellow-man whom you have deserted. Mrs. O'Brien keeps me informed of your doings; says you have set up a small pink-and-white mother to whom you offer oblations of incense from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same. Why would you not take me for a mother?

> "'Thy elder brother I would be,
> Thy father, anything to thee.'

I have a fine taste for oblations myself which you have never gratified.

"I am writing to report on your successor, now duly installed. I am already satisfied that he will make a far more efficient assistant than the last incumbent. Does that make your cheek glow like a sunrise in autumn and the dusky velvet of your eyes change to flame? I hope so. If I could but see you once more in one of your wraths!

"To tell the truth the new Cub is a contrarious Cub and when I saw him some thirty minutes since sitting at your desk and having the impudence to use your very blotter and ink bottle I all but exterminated him. I cannot now remember why I didn't quite. It was certainly heedless of me. There are many things to be said against him as, item: he keeps records of things and conscientiously submits them to me, has a beggarly system about him which my soul hateth; also, he looks

up to me with reverence; I apprehend that I am in some sort his ideal. Fancy how it bores me! You never bored me that way. Alas and yet again alas! The Stoics to-night. I must order the terrapin this minute.

"Yours,

"WARNER TIFFANY."

"From whom is your letter, Noelle?" asked Mrs. Motte.

As she spoke she stepped to the fire and threw into the embers a letter with a foreign post mark. The seal of the letter remained unbroken Noelle observed, but she made no comment on the circumstance.

"It is from Dr. Tiffany."

"Very courteous of him, I am sure. Men of his stamp seldom remember those who serve them."

"True. It is better, I think, they

should not. Is some one knocking at the kitchen door?"

"I think so."

"How tiresome! I wish we could 'live, love, die, alone, John,' for five minutes."

As she spoke Noelle left the room and opening the kitchen door found there a small, ragged boy whom she remembered. He handed her an untidy scrap of paper tightly folded. Opening it she read:

"Please come to Ward's Point quick. I may have to die. KATY."

Giving the child a dime, Noelle turned away when he said:

"That little gal of Mis' Jenkins's what lives down to the Point she come on the keen jump with that letter as fur's our house and got me to fetch it the rest of the way. She said the

old man's goin' on somethin' awful—fit to kill."

"Thank you, Jim. That is all."

Returning to the dining-room, Noelle told her mother in a careless tone that she had to go out and look up some tiresome Sunday school children. Without apparent haste she made herself ready for the street, bade blithe good-bye and went out. The moment the house door closed upon her she dropped her air of indifference and fairly flew to the end of Gore Terrace where the car line passed.

IV

WHILE Miss Motte in her shabby cottage was reading his letter, Dr. Tiffany was seated much at ease in Mrs. O'Brien's drawing-room.

Turning to him from her last departing visitor, his hostess, a radiant vision in house gown of pearly white, cried:

"Thank Heaven the last bore is gone and you can talk to me! I trust you are in anti-clerical vein to-day."

"Was I ever in other than that in your presence, Madam?"

"Perhaps not,—save only at the font and altar. Still I am not sure."

Mrs. O'Brien had seated herself for a tête-à-tête with the clergyman, who regarded her with meditative admiration.

"Tell me now about your Viking; I saw him yesterday afar off. How did he happen? I foresee that he will add to the gaiety of the nation."

"My Viking, is it? Let me think. I shall be able to follow in time. In that pose, Mrs. O'Brien, you are a Sargent portrait. Pray do not move."

"I suppose you expect me to say that you are a Sargent or even a Van Dyck in any pose, but I shall not do it. It is atrocious the way people flatter you. Why were you so silent this afternoon when those tiresome people were here? You would not help out a bit. I take it ill that you didn't bring your Viking along to do me his devoir."

"My Viking again. Oh, now I have it!"

"I should think so indeed, Dr. Tiffany. Who is coming in now? I thought it was too late for any more

calls." Mrs. O'Brien rose and moved to a point where she could command a view of the hall. "What a coincidence," she murmured, turning back to Dr. Tiffany; "he has come of himself."

"The Reverend William Cameron Dane?"

"Yes, if that is the name of your new coadjutor." There was a pause, then with unfeigned surprise the lady added, "How very odd! Why has he gone up-stairs?"

"Sit down, dear Mrs. O'Brien. Dane is here plainly in the pursuit of his calling. Let us enjoy the situation together. There is a certain delicate irony in it as I conceive it. Will you give me another cup of tea?"

"Certainly, but you ought to go home and get ready for your Stoics. It is half past six and Miss Tiffany will be in a state, I should think."

"Very probably," said Dr. Tiffany, deliberately helping himself to cream. "Listen now. Young Dane, as you know, is the new assistant pastor of Calvary. He comes fresh from the divinity school, fresh from his graduation, fresh from everything. He may not know life yet but he desires intelligently to do so, also to work himself to death for the good of the parish,—an amiable weakness of his youth. The excellent Miss Motte, who until recently, as you know, helped me in certain departments of my work which she has now dropped, left copious notebooks for the use of her successor,—tabulated lists of the Lame, the Halt, and the Blind, the worthy and the incorrigible Poor, the Shut-in, the Outlaw, the Backslider! My conscientious Sea-King, my Dane, observe, tackles these notes with a perfect fury of good intention. He will do up the

whole parish before the Fourth of July I am confident, and be able to go fishing for a holiday. But now the point is this, I gather: near the head of the list of Shut-ins Miss Motte doubtless wrote the name of Matthew O'Brien. Dane figures to himself with his fertile but unlucky imagination some Salvation Army product—"

"Oh, to be sure! He would fancy Matt an Irish Catholic convert somewhere in the slums, wouldn't he?"

"Precisely. Thinking to get a hard job over, you see, Dane hastens to Ridge Road, expecting to find a slum, to call at the tenement of one Matthew O'Brien and read, pray or play checkers with him as circumstances shall appear to dictate."

Dr. Tiffany, with a smile of cynical enjoyment of the situation, had risen and walked slowly toward the hall door, his hostess beside him.

"And he brings up," he continued, lowering his voice which was mellow with silent laughter,—"*here*," and he made a significant gesture indicating the sumptuous interior, "and with Matt! Picture his revulsion of feeling."

Mrs. O'Brien did not smile. For a little space she made no reply, and a cloud of care rested visibly on her face.

"How he will bore Matt," she sighed. "If only he—if any one—could help!"

"It is perfectly possible that he can," replied the clergyman, with a swift change of mood to meet hers; "he is a good lad, and will do his best, you can depend. God grant that by him, since not by me, some message of hope and comfort may come to Matt."

The last sentence was spoken with the tender solemnity of a benediction. Dr. Tiffany had been Mrs. O'Brien's

pastor since her girlhood. Her lips trembled piteously.

"It is too late to hope for a thing like that," she murmured. "He grows more bitter, more despondent all the while."

"Courage, dear child," he said, and laid his hand for a moment on her drooping head. Then the house door closed upon him and she was left alone. Turning she walked slowly the length of the hall, a sense within her of some sudden influx of heart and hope. In moments like this Warner Tiffany, at other times cynic, *bon viveur*, even worldling as he seemed, became wholly the spiritual master and exerted over her an irresistible religious authority. Her husband, she knew perfectly, would ascribe this to psychic rather than to spiritual power; but he was never fair to Dr. Tiffany. Mrs. O'Brien wondered vaguely why, as she passed

up the stairs and knocked at his door.

Upon her entrance a broad-shouldered, fair-haired young fellow, whom she had not inaptly styled "the Viking," rose promptly and was presented to her by Mr. O'Brien as his "ghostly counsellor."

"I have a chaplain of my own now, Cornie," he added. "I shall ask no more of Tiffany. Excuse us if we go on for a moment longer about radium. We shall be through in a minute."

Mrs. O'Brien, glad of a quiet chance to study Dane's ensemble at leisure, took up a magazine and subsided into an easy-chair. Presently Dane consulting his watch rose to go, breaking into his host's eager discussion.

"Confess now," said Mrs. O'Brien, "that a lecture on radium was not what you expected on this visit, Mr. Dane."

"No, not exactly. Still this is my first pastoral call and I did not know what to expect."

"You were looking, however, for a disabled mechanic or labourer, shut up in a dreary tenement,—is it not so? Am I clairvoyant?"

"You must be," cried Dane much surprised and flushing a little; "but how can I have betrayed all this? I fancied I was hiding my process of re-adjustment rather successfully, while you it seems were turning some species of spiritual X-ray upon the convolutions of my brain."

"A way she has," said Mr. O'Brien. "I saw nothing of all this. If you had anything to conceal you concealed it with a diplomacy which I find disturbing. I was captivated, Mr. Dane, by the idea that you were absolutely straightforward,—one man,—not two or twenty like most of your profession.

To tell the truth I am mortally tired of your Protean prelate of the all-things - to - all - men - if - haply - he - may-win-some type."

"It is at least in my favour then that my diplomacy was not so subtle as to deceive Mrs O'Brien."

"Mrs. O'Brien is accustomed to the society of a clerical Macchiavelli," said Matt, bitterness in his irony.

"I wish to welcome you to our church, Mr. Dane, and especially to our home;" Mrs. O'Brien spoke hastily, almost as if to cover her husband's remark, and added with imperious emphasis, "and you will let me congratulate you sincerely upon coming into this intimate relation with Dr. Tiffany. He has been my pastor for ten years and I think him a very wonderful man."

"Is he not!" cried Dane, his face suddenly touched with generous en-

thusiasm. "It is the greatest honour and the greatest privilege I have ever had to work under his direction."

Matthew O'Brien's face as he listened wore a sneer, which rendered his disfigured features almost devilish. Dane's face was turned away from the invalid chair.

"It is certainly a liberal education to come under the influence of such a man," responded Mrs. O'Brien seriously.

A sardonic but half audible Amen came from the chair's recesses.

"How well the church is organized," continued Dane; "Miss Hill is a most efficient worker, and Miss Motte, the other assistant, I judge from the way she has laid out the work left behind for me, must be a woman of the same order."

Mrs. O'Brien smiled.

"Possibly you will have to go

through another process of readjustment when you meet Miss Motte. She is somewhat younger than Miss Hill."

"Mr. Dane, they are about as much alike," interposed Matt, with clear-cut emphasis, "as the Blue Grotto at Capri and a box stall. The Hill is as interesting as the latter; the Motte—well, the Motte is a mystery."

Mrs. O'Brien laughed although with a touch of constraint.

"I am sure I cannot think what you mean, Matt. Mr. Dane, poor Miss Motte is nothing of the kind. She is simply a good Christian girl working hard for her living."

V

"OH, Dr. Tiffany, how glad I am not to have missed you!" With this breathless exclamation Miss Motte intercepted the clergyman on his way home from the O'Briens.

"You flatter me, Miss Motte," he responded with an amused smile. "At my age a man may take heart of grace when a charming girl runs to overtake him and thanks high heaven in the market-place that she has found him. What has happened to advance my value so suddenly?"

"Oh, please, don't take time to droll. I am in such a hurry. There is something terrible going on down at the Point, at the Duffys'; Katy has

sent me a note imploring instant help. Her father must be at his very worst. The message came quite an hour ago and not one thing is done yet. I knew I ought not to go there alone, so I went first for Miss Hill."

"And she is out of town."

"Yes. Then I went to your house and Miss Tiffany was expecting you every moment, but thought you might be at Mr. O'Brien's."

"Gratuitous presumption on Laura's part," commented Dr. Tiffany lightly. "Well, precisely what is your thought, my little friend?"

"I cannot go there alone, can I?" Noelle asked, her dark eyes full of reproachful appeal. "I supposed you would go with me."

"Unluckily I can't. The Stoics meet with me to-night;—in fact, they must be meeting themselves at my house this minute."

Dr. Tiffany's impassiveness fanned Noelle's eagerness to white heat.

"But Katy's life is in danger!" she cried, "What is a Club meeting at such a time?"

Dr. Tiffany smiled.

"I have not the smallest idea that the danger is such as you imagine. Katy is a hysterical little Irish girl, a good deal of a goose anyway. Her father is not so bad as he is painted. She likes to work up a sensation to call you down there."

"You have not seen Duffy when he was drunk enough to make him sheer devil. I know this case better than you do, Dr. Tiffany. But no matter, I can go alone," and Noelle turned away, deeply offended, her eyes flashing their indignation.

"Don't leave me in anger, my child. I have an escort ready for you on the spot. The Cub is coming. He has just

turned the corner of Madison Street coming also from shepherding the O'Briens. He looks to me capable of knocking Duffy out on the first round. Holloa, Dane, see here, please!"

A moment later Dane had joined them. A few words of introduction and explanation followed, upon which the young man declared himself more than ready to fly to the rescue of Katy Duffy.

Noelle waited for nothing more, but made a dash for the next street car, followed by Dane, Dr. Tiffany being left to pursue his apparently untroubled way. In reality he had been seized with keen annoyance upon catching Dane's sudden change of expression as he met Noelle.

"Doubtless the youngster thinks himself in dead luck," growled the older man to himself, "and so he is. What an idiot I was to give him such

a lead. Hang the Stoics! Hang Duffy! Above all hang Dane!"

Noelle occupied the first ten minutes of the long run on the street car in giving Dane the main points in the miserable story of Katy Duffy and her brutal and intemperate father. By the time this was done an acquaintance was in some sort established between them. They settled into silence to draw conclusions.

Noelle's first impression of William Dane, in the midst of all her perturbation, was an echo from an old ballad, —" with an eye that takes the breath." That Dr. Tiffany's new assistant should be a manly looking fellow of pleasing cut and colouring would not have interested her especially; but when had she seen that look in a man's eyes of lofty purity and consecration? Not since death had hidden from her her father's eyes. She almost feared

to meet his glance, for the strange disquietude it brought her.

In her imperious intensity and the singular tropical richness of her colouring, Noelle had struck Dane at first flush as being like some brilliant foreign princess, but now as they sat quietly side by side in the dingy car she became a wholly different being in his eyes.

In her dark woollen working dress, its bit of braiding worn and faded, in the much mended gloves, the commonplace little hat and jacket, he discerned care and economy; while in her face as she recounted to him the sorrows of her Irish protegée, he found the artless unconsciousness of a child mingled with the directness of a wholly sincere nature. The fantastic impression of the foreign princess faded away and beside him sat a slender girl in humble working clothes

with a certain pathos in her velvety eyes, to be sure, and a witchery about her short red upper lip, but just a simple American working girl as Mrs. O'Brien had described her. Why was it that in her working girl character Miss Motte made so much more powerful appeal to his imagination, he asked himself, than in her brilliant first impression?

The car, empty now of all passengers save themselves, swayed around a curve, bumped over two or three switches, slowed down and came to a standstill. Noelle hastened to lead the way by a rough and narrow path skirting a cove of stagnant water, sullen in the gathering dusk. A woman looked from the door of a solitary house and spoke to the girl as they passed.

"It's high time somebody come and I'm glad it's you, Miss Motte," she cried. "I don't like the look of things

down there to Duffy's. Katy threw that note out the window to Libbie this mornin' and I hain't seen nothin' of the poor thing sence. Before that he was beatin' her awful and Lib says she's locked herself into a closet to keep out of reach. No one don't dare to interfere with him when he's like this."

"Hurry," Noelle cried to Dane. "She may be dead or worse before we can reach her."

She pointed onward, along the low, straggling neck of land where, from the window of a rambling barrack-like house, an abandoned tavern, a dull light flickered.

"That is the place. Please realize, Mr. Dane, that we must be quick and careful. Duffy is a violent and dangerous man at times. You cannot argue with him or oppose him. He is base through and through."

They had turned now into the dark, shadowy yard.

"Stop a moment," said Dane urgently. "This can be no proper place for you. I shall go in alone. You must let me."

"I have to go," said the girl simply. "My poor Katy would not know the voice of a stranger. She has learned to fear."

Trying the house door they found it unlocked and stepped quietly into a long, bare corridor running back into dim regions. Light showed under a closed door immediately at the left as they entered. Dane opened it and they both stepped across the threshold. A woman in a showy velvet mantle and plumed hat sat alone beside an uncovered table on which stood empty glasses and a candle in a greasy tin candlestick. The air was heavy with foul odours of whiskey and tobacco.

Noelle looked fixedly at this woman sitting solitary and waiting in the vacant room and her face grew stern. Without rising, the woman spoke with a hard and impudent assurance.

"Good evening. I suppose you can set down if you can find seats that ain't too dusty. My, ain't it horrid here? I ain't used to such places myself. I hope Duffy won't keep you folks waiting as long as he has me. I come down to look up a girl of his they said wanted to hire out to do waitress work. My waitress she up and left me last week, so I thought I'd see about this Duffy girl. But likely as not she won't be no good when I get her."

Noelle in silence made a sign to Dane. They stepped back into the corridor and closed the door. Through the gloom he could see that she had grown pale and that her eyes were wide and appalled.

"I know who, what—that woman is," she whispered. "Nothing could be worse unless we had come too late. Listen!"

From the depths of a passage which crossed the corridor at the rear of the house the sound of a hoarse, harsh voice reached them. Noelle placed her hand in his.

"Come softly," she whispered. "We are descending into hell," she added solemnly.

The touch of her hand fired Dane's heart and thrilled him with an exultant joy in the midst of the hideous surroundings. He did not ask her to go back now. He knew her better. As well ask an angel to go back when a soul was to save. Besides, were not heaven and he strong to protect her?

They turned at the end of the corridor and stopped. At the foot of the passage before a door stood a man of

shambling figure with coarse, unkempt hair, a tool of some kind in one hand, a leather thong hanging from the other. On the floor a candle guttered and flickered. Their approach was imperceived.

"You unlock that door now this minute."

Something sinister in the menace of the harsh whisper made Noelle faint for a few seconds.

"You needn't think you can fool me, locking yerself up in the closet. I've found my chisel now and that lock'll be picked inside half a minute. When it's busted open you're going to git such a hiding as'll make you wish you'd never ben born."

Again silence, but it was broken by a long, sobbing wail from within the closet. Dane felt Noelle clinging hard to his arm; her breath came quick against his cheek.

"If you'll be a good girl, Katy," again came the whisper, but this time in a coaxing whine, "I won't lay a hand on you. Just you unlock the door and come out and go with the lady now. Here she's ben and come herself all the way down here after you. She'll treat you fine. You won't have to do a lick of work."

"Stay where you are."

Dane spoke to Noelle in a quick, imperative undertone, withdrawing his sleeve from her unconscious clinging hand. With a few strides he was at the spot where Duffy stood.

"Look here," he called in a loud voice.

Turning swiftly in surprise, Duffy found himself face to face with the tall, threatening figure.

"It's time you quit that now, Mr. Duffy," he said. "Let the child alone. You have tormented her enough."

"Who are you, I should like to know?" shouted Duffy in fury, squaring off instinctively for a fight and raising his hand in which the chisel was clenched.

Before he could move or speak again a blow from Dane's fist square between the eyes knocked him to the floor, breath and sight and sense gone out of him for the moment.

"Now, Miss Motte, if you please!"

Dane spoke with almost gay composure. In an instant Noelle's lips were at the keyhole of the locked closet door.

"Katy, Katy," she called softly. "This is Miss Motte. Come out quick. Hurry. You are to come home with me."

A wild cry broke from behind the door; then the key turned in the lock and the figure of a young girl, trembling and cowering, came into view.

Taking her hand without the delay of a second, Noelle drew the terrified child to her side and fled with her from the house, Dane following.

Realizing that they would attract attention in a car, they made their way on foot from the Point by a network of unfamiliar streets to Gore Terrace.

"This is our home, Mr. Dane," said Noelle as they stopped breathless at the door of 78. "Thank you. You have saved Katy, perhaps me as well," and she gave him her hand. Without reply he hurried away, bound for the precinct police station to enter complaint against Duffy and ensure Katy's safety from further brutalities.

When Miss Motte reached her own room, having deposited Katy in her mother's hands, it is a curious fact that the first thing she did was to look at her own face for several seconds in a small mirror. This, instead of a suit-

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able swoon or falling on her knees in prayer, proves Miss Motte to be no true and well developed heroine.

A few days later Dane called at the small house in Gore Terrace to inquire for Miss Motte and Katy.

He saw only Mrs. Motte, who was gently, delicately courteous. Nevertheless, he came away convinced that his visit was unwelcome. At least, he was not asked to repeat it.

VI

ON the first Sunday of May Dr. Tiffany opened the church building campaign to the Calvary congregation in form with a tremendous sermon from the text, "In the name of our God will we set up our banners." He was able to announce that, through the magnificent generosity of one man, a lot had been given in the most desirable part of Ridge Road, a site on the whole surpassing that of any ecclesiastical edifice in the city and worth at the lowest valuation thirty thousand dollars. The plans, already drawn by one of the most famous of New York architects, called for a building of stone from base to turret top, a church which might cost

nearly a hundred and sixty thousand. This was a conservative estimate, but what if it should run over? Like him of old the people of Calvary had it in their heart to say, "I will not pay my vows unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."

At the close of service Dane, who had listened to the sermon of his superior with loyal enthusiasm as had the people, met Mr. Samuel Search, the donor of the building lot. Dane was distinctly surprised at the personality of the noble and generous giver. Mr. Search, a small man with a red face and prominent, unsteady eyes, stood leaning against the end of a pew, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, glancing from one to another of the half-incredulous faces clustered around him with a smile touched by a trace of maliciousness.

"Yes, sir, yes, sir," he repeated,

"I've set the pace and now it's up to you fellows to keep it up. I always like to rejoice the hearts of the brethren and promote the cause by a good example. I may not be much on the devotional, but when it comes to the real thing I guess you find me on the spot every time. But you want to notice what a lot on Ridge Road calls for! The rest of you will have a chance to do your little part. Mr. Dane? The pastor's new assistant? Glad to meet you, sir. Well, yes, we have made a little start to-day, but the start isn't as important as the finish. There'll be a stiff tug yet. The fact is, Mr. Dane, our church has got to hustle if it's going to try to keep up with the procession here in Pemberton, and there isn't much use trying to do business unless you've got a first class plant. We've got to aim high or give up beat."

Dane came away presently with a wretched soreness of spirit.

Two Sundays later the pastor of Calvary Church appeared before his people with a countenance charged with impressive solemnity and made a powerful appeal to them from the text, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." If the opening sermon in the new enterprise had seemed to be savoured by a faint tincture of worldliness it was neutralized by the profound spiritual fervour of this. The work of Christ could only be carried on under suitable conditions. The crisis for Calvary's very life demanded the new church; it was a time for deep spiritual proving; let every man examine himself whether he had indeed crucified the flesh and given or pledged his part toward the glorious work down to the real quick of self-sacrifice.

On the following day Dane made a round of parish calls which chanced to take him among the humbler families of the parish on quiet, unpretending streets. During these calls he was met again and again by expressions of discouragement and anxiety concerning the new church.

"What can we do?" asked the wife of a school teacher. "We have but twelve hundred dollars a year to live on and these three little children. Everything is so dear now that it seems impossible even to keep the weekly bills paid. We want to do our part and are trying hard, but I wonder when Dr. Tiffany preaches to us as he did Sunday, on sacrificing down to the quick, if he knows what it must really mean—what can it, but not to have enough for your children to eat?"

Dane wondered too. He thought of the seven course dinners which Dr. Tif-

fany was fond of giving. He was beginning to wonder more and more. Whispers had not been slow in reaching him as to the financial practices of Mr. Samuel Search, even as to his personal morality. He had come to Pemberton with a species of hero-worship for Dr. Tiffany as a prime spiritual and intellectual force. Was it to suffer shock?

On his way home he passed the foot of Gore Terrace and found himself irresistibly drawn to turn his steps to Noelle's cottage. Perhaps he had imagined Mrs. Motte's coldness. At his ringing Noelle herself came to the door, and the light which involuntarily leaped into her face flooded his heart with balm. The girl in a fresh cotton gown and dainty white apron gave an effect of housewifeliness,—a new aspect of her which enchanted him.

He was bidden to enter the little parlour and for a few moments they sat alone together, a sense of intimate seclusion strong upon them, for the night of their descent into hell together had revealed them each to the other as months of ordinary acquaintance could not have done.

"I was disappointed in not seeing you when I called to inquire," he said, his eyes full upon her as she found when she lifted her own.

"I did not know that you had been here," she replied in surprise. "I wondered a little, — Katy has not learned all her duties yet. She has become our little maid, you know."

"It was Mrs. Motte whom I saw," Dane replied; then, as a swift shade of perplexity crossed Noelle's face, he wished he had kept the fact to himself. "But I do not wonder she did not remember. I did not even come in, being

in a hurry. I should have come every day since—to inquire, you know—if I had dared."

Noelle laughed joyously, although plainly there was nothing to laugh at. "Every day would be a little often," she said demurely.

"For you, yes, but not for me. There is so much to learn from you—"

"Oh, about the church work? I will be glad to explain anything I can."

"Really, will you? May I talk my work over with you sometimes? Honestly, I am needing light more than you can think. I am sure you could reconcile—"

"Mr. Dane? Good afternoon."

Mrs. Motte had entered the room noiselessly and bowed to the visitor with an air of intense reserve, her face so wan as to be spectral.

"What is it, Maman?" cried Noelle.

"When you are at liberty I shall be glad to see you, Noelle."

Dane took his hat and departed without delay.

VII

THE first social function entered into by Mrs. Matthew O'Brien on her return from her seashore villa in October was a small dinner.

Like most dinners this one represented a variety of purposes. Mrs. O'Brien's purposes-in-chief were to further an acquaintance between Mr. Dane and Miss Adelaide Search, in accordance with a suggestion of Dr. Tiffany's, and to bring Mrs. Motte to her house to gratify Matt, who had not thus far seen Noelle's mother and had a strong desire to do so.

Taking account of the situation when dinner was two thirds over, with her eye of practised social discrimination Mrs. Motte perceived that Miss Search was frost to Noelle and Noelle ice to her; that Dane was of intention de-

voted to Miss Search but that no word spoken by Noelle was lost upon him; that little Mrs. Motte in her clinging crêpe and tiny bands of lawn was scoring a success on every side with the piquant charm of her personality and of her slightly foreign manner and speech; that Noelle had grown thin and pale through the summer and that on her face was an indefinable impress of suffering.

Dinner over Mrs. Motte was conducted up-stairs to Mr. O'Brien's library to make the long desired acquaintance; Miss Search was bound a captive in chains to the piano by the flattering importunity of the hostess, who *sotto voce* gave an imperious order to Mr. Dane to show Miss Motte the blossoming century plant in the conservatory. The remaining ten or twelve guests sat in the music room at attention.

In the shade of the century plant Dane took Noelle's hand with a sudden impulse not to be resisted and said earnestly,

"It is three months since I have seen you. You are not well; something in your face breaks my heart. Can you tell me?"

"There is nothing to tell."

Noelle spoke lightly but tears hung heavy on her lashes at his tone.

"I have had just four notes from you. They are here always," and he touched his breast. "Have I lost any? Have you written more than four?"

"Can I remember?"

Noelle's eyes said, however, "Can I forget?"

"I cannot come to the house since I feel your mother's aversion to me. Is there any way in which I can overcome it?"

"There is no aversion to you on her part."

"What does it mean, then—her attitude?"

"I cannot tell you," the girl faltered. "It is impossible for me to explain. It would be the same to any other man—"

"Who cared for you?"

A deep flush rose to Noelle's cheeks; she drew away her hand which she had suffered until now to rest in his and drew back, but she did not deny.

"Noelle, I care, you know I care—"

"Dear, you must not care—it is hopeless."

Then she felt his kiss on her forehead and met the worship in his eyes.

"Never,—never again," she whispered, but her eyes were aflame with response to his passion. With no other word she hurried back to the others and a little later made an excuse to

join her mother up-stairs. She left Dane bending with due air of social consecration at Miss Search's side, imploring her to play again, that he might have space to taste again in silence the sweet pain of those breathless moments.

At the entrance of Mr. O'Brien's dimly lighted library, Miss Motte was met by a cordial welcome from the invalid. Her mother sat quiet and at ease facing him but not able to discern his features in the shadow of his high backed chair.

"Be seated, Miss Motte," cried Matt in his finely resonant voice; "Heavens, how handsome you are to-night! And how come you, Mademoiselle, by that conquering air? that scarcely suppressed aura of exultation, you, wont to be gentle and submissive?

"'There's a language in her eye, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks!'

However, don't interrupt your mother, if you please, with much speaking. We are conversing eloquently in French, at the moment, of the Himalayas; I am doing particularly well myself. Continue, Madame, if you please."

Noelle listened in silence to their conversation, seeing her mother's enjoyment in her brightened eyes, heightened colour and in a certain shy, flattered manner she wore.

"Don't get excited, little Mère Angelique," she commented at a pause in their talking. "You know you can't stand much flattery without having your head turned."

"Soyez tranquille, petite," said her mother laughing lightly. "I was about to say, Mr. O'Brien, that I prefer Darjeeling myself to any other Himalayan resort. It was our summer home in India."

"Oh, if I could go back to it to-morrow," cried Noelle under her breath. "Open my heart and you will see—Darjeeling and Agra!"

"So you remember Darjeeling?" Mr. O'Brien turned his keen eyes upon the girl. "I thought you told me you had no recollection of the place where you were born."

"Oh, of Mussoorie? That is true. I was born in Mussoorie but we never went there after that year, did we, Maman?"

Mrs. Motte shook her head.

"Oh, yes, to be sure it was Mussoorie." As Matt spoke he felt a curious constraint and restlessness in Mrs. Motte's bearing.

"I was born on Christmas day, Mr. O'Brien," said Noelle, "that is why my mother named me Noelle. Come, love," and the girl rose as she spoke, "it really is not respectful to those

people down stairs to stay here any longer."

"If you please, a few moments more," said Matt in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed. "I have something in which I am particularly interested to ask your mother about. An old student friend of mine in Germany is coming to this country, and to Pemberton curiously enough on some matter of business, I don't know or care what. He has been in India I am not sure how many years as a medical missionary, and is a great man out there, I have heard. I received this letter telling of his coming to America last week and it is dated Agra."

"What is your friend's name, if you please, Monsieur?"

The question came abruptly from Mrs. Motte; her voice was not steady.

"Hartlieb—Dr. Emil Hartlieb. He

may not have been in Agra when you were there, of course. I have known little of him of recent years. Here is an old photograph of him as a student which I have hunted up. See if you recognize it."

"I have met the gentleman," said Mrs. Motte, rising, scarcely glancing at the photograph.

Noelle, taking her hand, found that she was trembling violently.

"I cannot think why he should come to Pemberton," Mrs. Motte added rather to herself than to her host, and clasped her hands hard.

"It is curious, I think myself, but I am mightily pleased over it. Hartlieb was always a capital fellow. I shall insist upon his being my guest."

"I remember Dr. Hartlieb very well," Noelle began, but her mother interrupted her to make her adieux to

Matt who reluctantly accepted their excuses for departure.

"Will you tell Mr. Dane," he said to Noelle as she left the room, "that I expect a night visit? You know I never go to bed before two o'clock and Dane has become my night crony."

VIII

AT eleven o'clock, Boyle came in bringing coffee.

"Did you see the little white haired French lady, Boyle?" Matt asked, carelessly.

"Yes, sir. I stayed a minute in the room just to listen to her talking. Hasn't she the lively way with her?"

"Charming, perfectly charming. She is rather like her daughter, Miss Motte, isn't she?"

"Is Miss Motte that lady's daughter, Mr. O'Brien?"

Matt nodded, stirring his coffee contemplatively. "Certainly, why not?"

"Then, sir, the young lady must favour her father altogether, I should say. Nobody would pick them out for mother and daughter, sir. Miss Motte she's that dark skin, like velvet, and

the big brown eyes and so tall. Honestly speaking she is the most wonderful young lady I ever set eyes on. I stare at her as if I was bewitched every time she comes here."

There was a knock on the door and Dane appeared.

"Holloa," said Matt. "Boyle, bring some hot coffee," then, under his breath,—"I haven't a doubt she has bewitched this man too. A very destructive little person on the whole."

"What are you muttering about?" asked Dane, throwing himself into a chair.

"About the mysterious Miss Motte."

"Miss Motte is not a mystery; she is simply an angel."

"Oh, that was obvious always. There is more to it than that, Gossip Galahad. Sit down, dear Father in God, and we'll make a night of it. It's time I went to confession."

"It's time you stopped calling names, in my opinion."

"It is writ clear on your brow that you were born to be a seeker for the Holy Grail."

"By no means. I was born to be a shoe manufacturer."

Matt scanned Dane's face with sarcastic yet sympathetic attentiveness.

"You look it! Yes, I have heard of that chapter in your life. I know more of that dark past of yours than you think, even to the fact that the fellows called you Sir Galahad in college and that you deliberately chose to sit in the Siege Perilous, thereby turning your back on the manufacture of shoes and a fortune."

"I have done what scores of fellows do; the Galahad business is pure nonsense. But, nevertheless, the reason I chose to preach is because in the ministry at least to-day, with all the self-

ishness and materialism of modern life, the old ideal of Christian chivalry does live on, scoff if you choose. Listen, Mr. O'Brien, I am right in this. The man who goes in for this profession of necessity disregards money and power and despises luxury: he seeks to the best of his ability to uphold the rights of the weak and oppressed; he pledges himself to speak the very truth, to succour his brothers at arms, to be fair to his bitter foe. What is all this but knighthood?"

"Oh, Galahad, and oh, Galahad!" quoted Matt mournfully. "I, even I, am fain to put up a prayer that you alone of all men might 'bring back at eve immaculate the colours of the morn.' But it will be at your peril that you remain at Calvary Church." He laughed sardonically. "What a faithful portrait you have drawn of Warner Tiffany!—how he disregards money

and power and despises luxury! how hard he labours to uphold the rights of the weak and oppressed! how he speaks the very truth—"

"Mr. O'Brien, I cannot listen to this," broke in Dane coldly, his face grown very grave. He added in a matter of fact tone, "It is a cause for great anxiety to the church, to me also, that we seem so likely to lose Dr. Tiffany."

"Do not be disturbed on that score. That call to Boston has been carefully worked up by Dr. Tiffany to scare the Calvary people into completing the money-raising for the new church. He has not the smallest idea of leaving Pemberton. He is too fond of Mrs. O'Brien."

Dane made an exclamation of angry disapproval, rose and paced the room rapidly.

"Heavens, man," cried Matt, fero-

ciously, "can't you see that I am in the devil's own clutch—no, you could not understand, or—could you?"

"Go on. I follow you."

"Far from it. I dare say you have never known one moment of agony in mind or body, all your life. You are whole. Thank God for it. Look at me! My soul is in worse shape than my body, and that exquisite woman—my wife—is chained to both. No wonder Warner Tiffany pities her and seeks to minister to her spiritual comfort! From a woman's confidential doctor and a woman's confidential parson, good Lord deliver us! Yes, man, I am jealous and jealousy is cruel as the grave. I am jealous by nature and grace has not wholly transformed me yet," he added with an ugly smile.

Dane was silent.

"It is all my own doing, the life Mrs. O'Brien lives in society. I sent

her back into it after I was wrecked, resorting to the little fiction that only by the cheering echoes of her diversions could I be saved from despair. She was obedient and remains so to this day. I grin, poor devil, over her innocent conquests and flirtations and am inwardly devoured by jealousy. Why I don't take myself off I cannot tell; I think about it day and night. It is really the only decent thing for a man in my case to do."

"False—insanely false! Drop it if you are a man."

"But think of a shape like this hanging like a mill-stone around her neck."

"Your real mistake is just there, I think," said Dane. "Your mind, your self is unmarred, unmaimed. Your wife can never lose her pride in you, this being so. You have a mighty stake to play for, to train for:—to keep

sound and sane in spirit and so command your wife's love as you have thus far. She loves you devotedly and rejoices in your great ability. No, I do not pity your wife, far from it."

"You do not flirt with her either, which is more surprising," commented Matt reflectively, "since to do so runs in the clerical blood."

"Mr. O'Brien, let this poison of jealousy go. Don't fight it—reject it. There is something cleaner and better for you. Be the man who by the grace of God can wring good out of infinite pain. There are such men. They are the men who have gone deep enough to find at the heart of the universe—Love. Good night, dear man, dear friend. God be with you."

O'Brien's face relaxed.

"Very good, Galahad. Said I not you were born to be a man's father confessor, not merely a woman's?

Some day you shall shrive me and maybe I shall sleep. To-night I wake, unshriven. Oh, these sleepless nights!"

"If you wake, I watch."

Throwing himself on the sofa in the corner, Dane slept while the invalid was made ready for the night, then woke and prayed beside his bed.

A little later, Matt remarked, "You know who Emil Hartlieb is?"

"The medical missionary in Agra? Oh, yes, a truly great man from what I have heard."

"He is coming to Pemberton in a few weeks, is on his way now from India."

"Is it so? That interests me very much. I should like to see him immensely. I suppose he is to give lectures on his mission?"

"I doubt it. I doubt what his mission here may be. There is one person

in Pemberton who is not over anxious, I judge, to see Hartlieb. Mrs. Motte."

"And why not, I wonder?"

"I have not quite decided yet."

IX

A FEW weeks later, early in the evening, Dr. Tiffany, coming from the deathbed of a parishioner, rang the bell at the cottage in Gore Terrace. Katy Duffy opened the door and the visitor stepped directly into the small parlour. At a glance his eye took in with gratification the Oriental richness of the interior in contrast to the external meanness of the house, the grace of Mrs. Motte as she sat in the lamplight with a bit of dainty embroidery, the beauty of Noelle's face bent over a book. Suddenly aware that some one had entered, Noelle started to rise but he forbade her with a gesture.

"Be quiet, Miss Motte, if you please. Do not spoil the picture. Mrs. Motte,

good evening. I beg you not to rise. That smile is welcome enough for a prince. Will you let a pilgrim, a friar of orders gray, have a seat at your fireside for a few moments?"

Forthwith he seated himself in a deep wicker lounging chair and, leaning back, closed his eyes. Noelle saw that his face wore the stern yet tender solemnity which she had often noted in it when he came from the presence of death.

"You have been at the Butlers'?" she asked gently.

"Yes."

"Is George alive still?"

"No. He died less than an hour ago."

"You are tired, Dr. Tiffany?"

"I had not thought of it. Possibly."

"You have had no dinner."

"A mere detail."

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"But really,—it will not do, you know. What may I get you?"

"I should like some coffee—nothing more. Is it too much trouble?"

"You know it is not."

"Dr. Tiffany, please understand, it is great honour for me that I may prepare you coffee. Noelle will talk with you while I direct Katy. But, child—is there cream?"

"Yes, Maman, quite three spoonfuls left in the small silver jug. Most lucky."

Mrs. Motte vanished. Noelle took up her embroidery and made feint of being busy with it, the better to allow her guest the silence she knew he preferred. He did not like one to prattle and flutter. She was not surprised at his saying nothing about her new home, although this was his first visit. To-night he was less the man than the minister, burdened with the care and

cure of souls, impervious to lesser matters. She glanced across at his face. Certainly he looked the ecclesiastic to perfection with the imposing gravity of his attitude, the massive modelling, the deeply expressive lines of his face. He caught her look as it was lifted and held out one hand with a very beautiful smile.

"Give me your hand, Noelle," he said quietly. "Give it to me in congratulation."

"And why?" But she gave him her hand.

"That to me is granted an hour so exquisite as this, a peace so perfect, an atmosphere so heavenly, when I might be in the lurid glare of a church carnival. Verily, the Cub hath his uses!" and he smiled whimsically.

Noelle did not reply. Presently Mrs. Motte entered with a tray containing a quaint foreign coffee service which

she placed upon a tabouret beside Dr. Tiffany's chair, then handed him a gleaming damask napkin, smooth as satin. Opening the napkin with luxurious satisfaction he glanced at the tray, where, beside the old blue Canton cup, appeared a plate of delicately browned toast and a tiny dish of spicy Oriental conserve.

"How very well you know how to care for a man, Madame," he said to Mrs. Motte with a graciousness which filled her with singular delight. It was in Dr. Tiffany's power to do this when he chose, a part of his claim to distinction, of his hold upon a large body of people. When he had ended eating and drinking, which he did abstemiously and in silence, he drew up to the centre table and took in his hand the book which Noelle had laid down upon his entrance.

"Ah!" he cried, as if in pleased

surprise. "So you have gotten hold of this old Anglo-Saxon poetry. I am glad. Do you know it well? Some of it is very noble." His fingers ran rapidly through the leaves with the familiarity of the bookman. "This now is truly great. Listen!—It is from Cynewulf's 'Dream of the Rood':—

"'Then I prayed me to the Tree, blithe of mood,
With a mickle eagerness . . .
. . . and my spirit was
Passioned for departure.'

"'Passioned for departure!'" he cried, lowering the book and looking up with fervour in his glance. "Was ever a phrase finer or more fit for a man's last hour? Stevenson's 'I lay me down with a will' has a note of intrepidity I love, but how it lacks this old Saxon's rapture of dying."

As he spoke, Dr. Tiffany turned the pages to the fly leaf, then closed the

book, all his fervour fled, and laid it down with a smile at Noelle which she found inscrutable.

His eye had taken in a small pencilled inscription: "N. M. from W. C. D." but this she did not guess.

"Is it to-night, Dr. Tiffany, that you have the Carnival of Nations for the benefit of the building fund?" Mrs. Motte asked politely, observing that the reading seemed to be over.

"Madame, yes. To me it would be Hades. But there are those to whom it is Paradise."

"Oh, really!" protested Noelle, laughing. "Do you think so?"

"Certainly. There is Dane now," and Dr. Tiffany laughed his mellow laugh. "Nothing could be more to his mind. He is certainly very young, younger than I had supposed. But to be sure there is Adelaide Search to the fore. Dane is hard hit, I judge."

"Oh, is he? How interesting." Noelle's colour deepened but her eyes met Tiffany's without shade of trouble.

"One cannot wonder. She is quite of the great world, you know, Miss Motte. The indescribable aroma of it clings to her very garments and exercises its own spell on the lad's senses. And besides, she is distinctly beautiful."

"That is true, Dr. Tiffany. I met the young lady at Mr. O'Brien's."

"Noelle, you do not speak. Be plucky now, and admit that Miss Search is beautiful even though she be your brother woman."

"I admire Miss Search very much," Noelle said coldly.

"Very good. So does my assistant. What time is it? Eight? Incredible!"

Dr. Tiffany rose and took up his

overcoat which he had hung on the back of the chair.

"I have over-slept—over-dreamed. I am due at the parish house at eight."

"Ah, then Dr. Tiffany will after all attend the Carnival!" cried Mrs. Motte archly. "Perhaps you do not in reality find it so dull."

Dr. Tiffany shook his head.

"It is not to the Carnival I am hastening, Madame. That is in the parish house to be sure, but in the assembly hall above. I go to the study below where I have an engagement to meet a man,—by the way, a man just landed, having come all the way from India."

"It must be Dr. Hartlieb," said Noelle.

"It is Dr. Hartlieb." Dr. Tiffany was already at the house door. "How did you know of him or his coming?"

"Through Mr. O'Brien."

"I see. Good night, Mrs. Motte. Thank you for your hospitality. Good night, Miss Motte."

The door closed upon him.

X

AT nine o'clock the Carnival of Nations was at its height. The crowd, confused with the multifarious challenge to attention, swayed hither and thither, heated, excited, eager. Everywhere was a chaos of colour, noise and perfume, and on every side those most interested were crying, "Success!" "Success!"

Dane pulled himself out of the tide which swept onward toward a stage on which the Dances of all Nations were being produced at intervals, attended by much brassy music and character songs. He threaded his way through a motley throng of continental soldiers, Dutch milkmaids, Empire beauties, and Turkish damsels in scarves and sequins, all of whom eyed

him with distinct favour and unconcealed demand for admiration. He found a retreat in the shadow of a flower booth and watched the scene for a moment.

A pretty girl in a low pink gown darted up to the booth crying shrilly,

"More roses, quick, give me a dozen more. I sold every one of those for two dollars apiece."

Snatching the roses she held them at arm's length before a young man who had just entered.

"R o s e s ! Roses!" she cried. "American Beauties of course. We have no other kind," and she flashed a saucy glance at the stranger who responded to her with looks and words of bold admiration.

Dane turned away with a sense of acute discomfort. He was detained by hearing his name spoken by some one within the shadow of the booth.

"Oh, Miss Search," he said; "I did not remember that you have this department. How long have you been here?"

"Quite ten minutes. Long enough, is it not? I promised simply to show myself. I am going to the opera now."

"May I help you to find your carriage?"

"That would be good of you."

A few moments later, Dane met Miss Search at the door of the dressing room, a fair and stately figure in her sweeping white evening cloak.

"To me you have the air, Mr. Dane, of not being enthusiastic over the Carnival of Nations," she said as they walked down to the level of the street.

"I find it detestable," he said soberly.

"Still it is the way we build churches now," she responded lightly. "You would better learn to like it.

There will have to be no end to this kind of thing for the next two years. The church is to cost—how much is it?"

"A hundred and sixty thousand dollars," Dane replied reluctantly.

"If the Carnival in these nights produces two thousand it will be extraordinary, will it not?" she added carelessly, then entered her carriage and was driven away.

In the doorway of the study as Dane turned back into the parish house he saw Dr. Tiffany; with him a stranger.

"Come in, Dane," said his superior. "I want you to meet Dr. Hartlieb. He came to Pemberton only this morning, direct from India. Mr. Dane, Dr. Hartlieb."

Dane found his hand taken in a friendly grasp by that of a tall, thin man with homely, strongly marked features, luminous, light gray eyes,

rather long brown hair swept back carelessly from a broad forehead, and a fringe of brown whiskers below the line of his chin. Dr. Hartlieb wore a low collar turned away from his throat and tied with a soft black silk knot. Altogether his appearance was unconventional to a degree, but possessed of a singular attraction; the eyes were convincing of a complete sincerity.

The three talked for a few moments, after which Dane excused himself to go to his own small study, once Miss Motte's, at the end of the long room.

"You are not returning then to the Carnival, Dane?" asked Dr. Tiffany.

"No. I think my absence will hardly be noticed," he replied drily, entered his own room and closed the door. A little after, he heard the others go out and the lower part of the house was left to him alone.

The room in which he had found

refuge was small and unimpressive, its furnishings hardly more than a desk, a chair or two and a set of shelves. Over the desk hung a copy of Rembrandt's great etching, Christ the Healer, below it the words, "*Could ye not watch with Me one hour?*" placed there by Noelle's hand.

Dane had made it his purpose to preserve intact every smallest arrangement as she had left it, and here and, as the months had passed, here alone, he seemed able to hold fast to the initial aspirations and ideals with which he had entered the ministry. In Dr. Tiffany's presence these were apt to seem a little absurd; in Matthew O'Brien's, impossible of attainment; in the presence of women like Mrs. O'Brien and Adelaide Search they lost their hold upon him and their reality.

But with Noelle herself and in this still shrine and sanctuary once hers,

with its careworn, compassionating Christ and its piercing question, Dane could find himself again, could again grasp his purpose of selfless scorn of personal advantage and devotion to the lowliest among men. To-night, however, a sudden hunger for Noelle's actual presence mastered him, for he was spirit-starved with loneliness.

"What of this place without her?" his heart cried out. "A dull and empty cell without love or light or language. It has no word for me even to-night when I need it most, no message or token. She is put far from me by some nameless, baffling barrier but I faint for the sight of her, the fragrance of her hair, the bloom of her cheek, the touch of her hand."

As Dane's thoughts thus ran on, a sudden impetuous impulse yet to discover some smallest token of Noelle's aforetime presence in the place rose

in him. He pulled out drawer after drawer from the desk, tossed his own papers into wildest confusion, but all in vain. Then a sudden thought came to him. Could that be a drawer, that flat, unbroken surface at the bottom of the desk, apparently its frame? He bent and pulled at it from below and it yielded after a little to his hand. A drawer, narrow and shallow, was drawn quickly into view, but it was empty save for a sprinkling of dust. Its counterpart on the opposite side, however, rewarded his search, for in it, covered thickly with dust, he discovered a small and shallow paper box of foreign make. He blew off the dust and found a cover of rose colour with tarnished gilt ornaments and a tiny square of looking glass, suggestive of the hoarded treasure of a child.

After a moment's hesitation, Dane opened the box. Inside there lay a

string of sandal-wood beads falling from their yellowed thread, a spray of jasmine, dry and brown, and a small, faded book. Nothing more. The book appeared to be a collection of Christian hymns printed in Hindustani. The imprint was Agra. By this he knew that the little forgotten treasure belonged to Noelle. On the inner cover of the book was written in laborious English:

"MISSY NOELLE:—Praying always for her and for her soon return to us, her own, respectfully,

"SONDERBAI."

Dane laid the things in place and closed the box with tender reverence. A strange throbbing delight awoke in him with this small discovery. That mysterious Indian childhood of Noelle's suddenly seemed alive and vivid

to his fancy. He could see the little creature, graceful, brilliant, imperious, like an Oriental princess, his old, first thought of her,—followed by adoring servants whom her father had led in the "Jesus way," and who prayed and looked always for the child of their love to return to them.

A knock on his door startled Dané. Opening it, he found to his great surprise Mrs. Motte. The clock struck ten. Dane held out his hand and spoke a word of greeting mechanically, but the suppressed agitation in her face and manner cut the effort short.

"What is it, Mrs. Motte?" he cried. "What can I do?"

"Oh, nothing, Mr. Dane," she said hastily. "I am sorry to have disturbed you. It is rather late, I fear. I have been to Mr. O'Brien's and they told me that he was probably over here with Dr. Tiffany. Dr. Hartlieb, I

mean. Excuse me," and she laughed nervously, "I am afraid I do not make myself very clear."

"Dr. Hartlieb was here nearly an hour ago, but I heard him go out with Dr. Tiffany. Let me go and inquire."

"No, if you please," she exclaimed, then stopped irresolute. "There is really not the slightest need of my seeing him to-night." The bright light of an electric burner was shining full on the small rose-coloured box as it lay on the desk. Mrs. Motte's eyes had fallen upon it. She stopped speaking and grew paler than she had been before.

"Did Noelle give you that?" she asked with disconcerting sharpness.

"No, Mrs. Motte," Dane replied gently. "I have just found it where your daughter must have left it forgotten, in one of those drawers."

She eyed him keenly, then stepped

into the room and took the box in her hand. Opening it, she examined the contents with an appearance of feverish anxiety, then to his further surprise, sat down in his desk chair. Something in her attitude betrayed, however, that the strength to stand had failed her. For a moment she sat in silence, her large blue eyes fixed upon his face; then she said slowly,

"Mr. Dane, some one ought to tell you that my daughter will never marry. She is pledged never to do so —while I live. When we know things certainly—" she broke off, laughed faintly, then rose, taking the box with her, and walked back through the long study, Dane, in great perplexity, attending her. A carriage was waiting before the door.

"Noelle thinks I am asleep," she said, and departed.

XI

ON the evening following the last night of the Carnival of Nations a reception was held at the residence of Mr. Bishop, a prominent banker of Pemberton, at which, for the surprise and entertainment of the guests, Miss Motte was to give a monologue. Her talent in this direction, not heretofore practised in public, had been discovered by Mrs. O'Brien. With enthusiasm that lady had exclaimed, "You are already the fashion in Pemberton, Noelle, but now we will have you the rage! If you have hitherto won shillings and pence with drawing-room lessons, you shall henceforth win sovereigns with drawing-room monologues."

This last consideration of necessity

prevailed with Noelle, who was finding the practical problem of sustaining her tiny household in Gore Terrace a difficult one.

It was after nine o'clock; the rooms were filled by a brilliant company, vaguely expectant. A whisper was going about that Mrs. Bishop had in reserve some rare and novel diversion, precisely what no one knew. Suddenly and swiftly at an unperceived signal the murmur and movement everywhere ceased, and all eyes converged on a central point midway of the vast drawing-room. Here a circle had been cleared and a small platform quietly introduced, covered with a rich rug. For a moment the miniature stage was unoccupied and many eyes were riveted upon a fragile, white-haired woman in black, who stood close behind it with a look of proud, yet painful tension in her dilated eyes.

This was Mrs. Motte, induced for the first time to be present at a large social function in Pemberton. A sigh escaped her lips as a slight veiled figure, draped in Indian silk of changing tints, appeared as if by magic and stepped upon the platform within reach of her hand.

Parting the transparent folds of white gauze from her face with one skilful movement, Noelle made slow, sweeping salaam, then explained in a few quiet words her purpose to set forth in impersonation the life of a Hindu woman of the *ancien régime* from its childhood to its close.

At the first glance the eye of the company was conquered by the girl's beauty, almost startling in the lustrous, clinging dress, her colouring set off by the glittering intricacies of profuse Oriental jewelry on hair, ears, throat, and wrists. In her eyes was

the dreamy brooding of introspection; but an anxious thrill ran through the company for her, for her voice, as she began speaking of her childhood, was light and tremulous, her face was colourless, her small brown hands, loaded heavily with strange symbolic rings, clasped and unclasped each other nervously while her body was rigid. But suddenly there was a striking change.

Unobserved by the company in general, Dr. Hartlieb had entered the room at the door not far from where Noelle stood. Mrs. Motte, standing immovable, lost every trace of colour. Noelle did not notice his coming, but a piercing and subtle fragrance was wafted towards her and an instant later a spectator, in obedience to a whisper passed along, bent forward and handed her a spray of white jasmine. Instantly the girl's face was suffused with light and colour, an elastic softness and mo-

bility came into her frame and, the jasmine pressed against her breast, she went on speaking in a voice of joyous, vibrant timbre. It was as if the odour had transformed her to the thing she wished to represent, had transported her into the scenes she sought to describe.

The theme ran on swiftly to the ceremonies and experiences of betrothal and marriage, of which the breath of the jasmine blossom was sign and symbol; then followed the proud exaltation of the mother of a son; the long hours of brooding seclusion behind the purdah; then the husband's death and the climax. With the piercing call "*Suth! Suth!*" there followed the wife's voluntary offering of herself, a living sacrifice, on the funeral pyre, secure in her faith in an instant reunion of her spirit with the spirit of the Beloved.

From point to point as she proceeded Noelle sang a few strains of Hindu music, now quick and exultant, again low and soothing; then, when the death motif was approached, little more than a prolonged musical wailing as of inarticulate sorrow. And all the while the wonder grew at the vivid beauty of her face, the pathetic mystery of her dusky velvet eyes, the subtle grace of her action; at the small hands, moving in quiet, mystical motions; the body and limbs, charged with an extraordinary power of passionate expression.

With the climax Noelle stepped forward, unclasped from throat and wrists and hair her gorgeous jewels and threw them to the floor, but fastened over her heart the jasmine flower, in token of the Bridal of Death. With slow, rhythmical steps she next moved three times around the sup-

posed funeral pile, chanting as she went the *Sancalpà:*

"That I may enjoy with my husband the felicity of heaven;

"That expiation may be made for my husband's offences —

"Thus I ascend my husband's funeral pile.

"I call on you, ye guardians of the eight realms of the world, —

"And upon my own soul, the god of the dead, day, night and twilight, —

"Thou too, conscience, bear witness: —

"I follow my husband's body on the funeral pile!"

As she sang this *Mantra,* her unveiled head lifted, her clasped hands extended, the triumph over self and mortal pain revealed in voice and action, the listeners were swept on to a height of emotional excitement which

left them breathless when they suddenly found that she had vanished through the crowd and all was over.

A moment of pulsating silence was followed by outbursts of tumultuous applause, and this by eager excited speech. From every side men and women crowded around Mrs. Motte with superlative expressions of congratulation upon her daughter's gifts. These were received with a species of strained and formal attentiveness thinly veiling a quivering excitement which betrayed itself in the tremor of her hands and in the spot of colour on each cheek which grew constantly deeper.

"Miss Noelle did not *render* the Spirit of the East, Mrs. Motte," a deep, mellow masculine voice at her right hand declared; "she *was* the Spirit of the East—the patience, the pathos, the passion of it are hers; also

the capacity for supreme self sacrifice."

"Possibly you overstate, Dr. Tiffany. Pardon me," said the little lady gravely, and turned quickly, hearing her name spoken at her left.

"At last, Mrs Motte, we meet."

Dr. Hartlieb, his hand extended, his face illuminated with anticipation in the meeting, with these words claimed her attention. Dr. Tiffany, as he turned to leave them, noted that Mrs. Motte as she gave her hand spoke no word of greeting and that her eyes searched Hartlieb's face with an almost tragic appeal. He heard the physician say with grave but affectionate gentleness,

"Do you know I have really come to Pemberton to see you?" then saw Mrs. Motte's fragile hand lifted in a quick deprecating gesture.

"Did Dr. Hartlieb know the Mottes in India, Mrs. O'Brien?"

Dr. Tiffany had crossed the room to that lady's side.

"Yes, very well, in Agra. He seems particularly anxious to call on Mrs. Motte. I have ordered the carriage to take him there to-morrow morning, if he finds that time suits her. But he will miss Noelle by going in the morning; she has classes all the morning from nine o'clock."

"I suppose all that will be at an end after this in short order."

"Why so?"

"Stars of the first magnitude are not hitched to the common cart of teaching very long. You have launched your star brilliantly, Mrs. O'Brien." Dr. Tiffany spoke without enthusiasm.

"Was she superb!" with ardour.

"Oh yes, that could have been fore-

seen. For my part, I could wish you had left her undiscovered."

"How extraordinary of you!"

"Not extraordinary in the least. It will simply be so much harder for me than ever now— " he broke off.

"Harder than ever to what?"

"You know, Mrs. O'Brien, perfectly. Harder than ever for me to marry her."

Mrs. O'Brien's face changed. She shook her head. "I am sorry," she said almost tenderly, "but a thing cannot be harder than impossible."

"You have not always thought this impossible," he responded quickly, watching her face keenly.

"Perhaps not before—" she paused.

"Before what?"

"Before you called up a spirit that you cannot lay." Then, in answer to

the authoritative demand in his eyes, she added, " your Viking."

Dr. Tiffany's massive face grew suddenly gray and grim.

XII

IN the great hall of the second floor, embowered with ferns and palms and lined with roses, Dane meanwhile was pacing up and down. Save for a white-capped maid here and there down the long vistas beyond he was alone. His eyes were fixed upon one closed door, his face was alive with eager expectancy. The door opened and a slender, dark-haired girl in a simple white gown came out. He met her with outstretched hands. Her face grew brilliant at first sight of him waiting thus; but when he took her hand tears had already dimmed the shining of her eyes, and an unwonted languor in her bearing moved him.

"Noelle," he said softly, leading her away to a window niche screened by

tall ferns, "I will not celebrate you with fierce phrases as they are all waiting to down there. You must know what you have done,—you have made your India live for us all."

Noelle sat now, a weary droop in her limbs, her head thrown back against the black oak panelling of the oriel; the faded spray of jasmine lay between her listless hands. She smiled faintly.

"It is more than that," she said; "it is alive for *me* again to-night after a long sleep."

"I know. It must have been. It was the reality which made it almost overpowering. You will be called upon for things like this—for Oriental interpretation in one way or another continually hereafter. It is inevitable."

"I shall never do the thing I have done to-night again." The girl spoke with sudden fire. "To turn the deep-

est life of my people and my own heart's heart into an evening's fashionable diversion! it is impossible. I forgot that part of it; then the applause showed me what I had done. Oh, I am so homesick!"

"Homesick for India?"

"For the sun and the rain, the beauty and the ugliness, the love and the sorrow of it, the pity and the pain. Yes," she went on passionately, "for they are my people and they need me —even me. They brood over their memory of me, they pray for me to come back, just a girl like me, little as I can do for them. They do indeed watch for me to return and their hearts are such patient hearts, Mr. Dane, and they have so few joys. Why must I stay here in this harsh, rich, prosperous, self-satisfied America, where even the poorest feel it a condescension to accept the service and

sacrifice of your very life, so familiar, so surfeited they all are with the practices of Christianity? There they have not known, they have not seen, they grope in darkness and stretch out hands which no one clasps—"

Noelle's voice faltered and she hid her face in her hands. The spray of jasmine, still penetratingly sweet, dropped by her side. Dane lifted it to his lips, then gently drew her hands away from her face.

"Listen," he said, glancing at the flower, "was it this? Did the fragrance bring the call of the East back to you?"

"That, and another bit of jasmine, brown and dead," she answered dreamily, "the ghost of a flower and the ghost of a fragrance. It lay in a little pink box, an old, old box that my ayah gave me when I was a child. Maman found it yesterday—"

"I have seen that box myself. It had a tiny square of looking glass on the cover."

Dane had broken in upon Noelle's last sentence, the suggestion of which he had failed to heed, so eager was he to prove himself able to enter into her experience. The girl looked up at him, startled inquiry in her eyes. A question came to her lips but remained unspoken.

"Do you remember?" he asked tenderly. "Can you recall where you left it now?"

"I am trying to," she said slowly. "Yes, it comes back to me, I had utterly forgotten that lowest desk drawer," and her cheeks flushed deeply.

"And *you* found it? And Maman—"

"That is nothing, an insignificant detail, a thing no one would remember

to mention," he broke in with a firm smile of reassurance, though inwardly increasingly stirred by Mrs. Motte's persistent ignoring. "And so the bit of faded jasmine and the breath of these blossoms which Dr. Hartlieb was literally inspired to bring you to-night are calling you back to your India, Noelle dear? And why not? Why not go back?"

"How can I?" she asked slowly, looking steadily, with a child's artless appeal into his face.

"With me," he said, bending and speaking low but with passionate earnestness. "I love you. You cannot guess just what such a love as mine means, but you feel a certain response to it." He smiled at the solemn reproach which sprang to her eyes. "Very well then. You too can love—do love me. There is some mysterious barrier which keeps me from you here,

but it cannot reach all the way to India, Noelle. Let us break away from everything and go together there. I too feel the call for *real* work where work is needed. My soul is sick of the methods I am using here to build up the social pride and material luxury of what they call 'Calvary.' The name has become incredible sacrilege to me," and Dane groaned involuntarily. "I have no right to say what I am saying;—there is, there must be a better side, but through and through I am conscious that we are working here in the name but not in the spirit of Christ. If I am to save anything I must go elsewhere. A year's association has marred miserably my ideal of the man I had most revered as a religious force."

"A year is too short a time to know Dr. Tiffany," interposed Noelle gravely; "he is not a religious force

in the sense in which you supposed him to be, in which his parish at large thinks of him. Still, he is a very great man. But for my own part," she went on even more earnestly, "I think you ought to be a foreign missionary. I do not see how a man with your temperament can be satisfied to be anything else. I hope you will go to India."

"And you? My wife must go with me."

"I can never be your wife. The barrier—you have spoken of there being one—would be the same there as here."

"Noelle, what can it be more than your mother's opposition?"

Silence.

"You said once that she would oppose any other man equally. I want you to explain."

"It is her love for me; I have prom-

ised," said Noelle, her eyes downcast, her hands clasped tightly. Then she added, "My mother cannot bear the idea that any one can ever come between her and me,—that I could love any one more. She knew intuitively, the moment she saw you — that — I must care. And I did. That is all."

"But it is insanely selfish."

Noelle's face grew a shade paler; she did not speak.

"It is morally wrong to let such an inhuman promise spoil the lives of two human beings. I solemnly protest against your yielding to a motive so tyrannous. You have rights to be considered. So have I."

"Hush, dear! It is a promise, it cannot be broken." Noelle laid her little cold hand for a moment on his, and met through her tears the stern protest in his eyes. She rose. He,

rising also, caught and held her trembling hands.

"No, you cannot leave me yet," he said imperiously. "I have more to say, more to ask. Listen. I can wait —years if I must; wait until I am a middle-aged man. Let us wait then until you are alone, my darling, and there is no one to oppose. Surely the trouble will be over then."

She shook her head.

"The trouble, oh love, the trouble could not be changed even if dear little Maman were gone, or if she were willing for me to break the promise. The trouble—"

Her voice faltered; she turned quickly, hearing a step approaching.

"I must know. You cannot refuse me—it is my right—" Dane began, the command of supreme emotion in his tone. Noelle made a gesture imploring silence, and turned to speak with

a maid who, unperceived by him, had discovered their presence in the oriel.

"I was looking everywhere for you, Miss Motte. Dr. Tiffany wants to speak to you."

Dane ground his teeth hard and stood motionless. Noelle, without turning to him again, followed the maid to the head of the stair-case where Dr. Tiffany stood waiting. His eyes measured her figure deliberately for a moment.

"It appears simplicity," he said musingly, "but, having taken a solid half hour to accomplish, it must be high art. Come and taste the sweetness of success, Miss Motte, and let it put some colour into your face. Your return is awaited with impatience, I assure you."

"I cannot go down, Dr. Tiffany," Noelle said wearily. "Will you please

ask my mother to come up? We must go home."

"Glory's thrill is o'er then, is it?" he commented; and now he studied her face narrowly.

"Very well. It is your night. Your monarchy is absolute."

Turning he descended the stairs slowly, but stopped on a landing and stood in the shadow of a tall palm, his arms crossed upon his breast, thinking closely. The guests were now beginning to move toward departure; although many passed him he did not see them, but when William Dane, his overcoat over his arm, his hat in hand, came into sight on the stairs above, his eyes were instantly upon him.

As Dane passed the older man noted two things: a profound and striking change in his countenance, and a spray of bruised jasmine carried unconsciously in his hand. In Dane's al-

tered look Dr. Tiffany recognized the same reaction of baffled passion which he had detected just now in Noelle. The crushed flower in his hand told the rest of the story. Dane ran down the stairs rapidly, stopping to speak to no one. Dr. Tiffany, watching from the landing, saw that he left the house without even making his adieux to his hostess.

Mrs. O'Brien and Dr. Hartlieb appeared now at the foot of the stairs. With an abrupt resolute movement the clergyman lifted his head, by force of will blotted from his face its strained intensity of reflection, and made ready to intercept them.

"Mrs. O'Brien, will you be so good as to take Mrs. Motte home in your carriage?" he asked in a casual tone as they met. "I am on my way now to beg of Madame the privilege of conveying our *holder Abend stern* to Gore

Terrace myself—in my own hired brougham."

"Do you think, at your age, it is right?" quoted Mrs. O'Brien laughingly, at the same time flashing aside at him a glance of delicate warning.

"I think, at my age, it is safe, dear lady."

Dr. Tiffany was already past them on his way down to find Mrs. Motte. Something in his tone caused Mrs. O'Brien to turn and look after him.

"Can you understand him? Can any one?" she spoke almost unconsciously in a low and troubled tone, then, half regretting, glanced up at Dr. Hartlieb. She met the invincible serenity of his eyes.

"He is most interesting, Mrs. O'Brien," Dr. Hartlieb said with the unconscious touch of authority which belonged to him. "If I am right Dr.

Tiffany is always an actor, in a fine sense, and often, most often, an actor of a great part."

When the pastor of "Calvary" settled back in his cushioned carriage beside Noelle a little later, driving away from the Bishop residence, he said to himself,

"And now for my surgical operation!"

To Noelle he remarked with a curious mingling of fatherly authority and restrained tenderness,

"And now what is all this trouble between you and Dane? Make your confession. I perceive there is nothing for it but for me to take a hand. I can't see two hopeful buds of promise blighted for lack of a little stern sense."

XIII

"WHAT is it, Mrs. O'Brien? Am I to come up? I am in the greatest hurry ever." Thus Noelle, standing in the O'Briens' hall at noon of the day following called up the stairs.

Mrs. O'Brien's head appeared as she leaned over the railing to reply.

"Yes, come straight up, if you will. Was I atrocious to 'phone you there at the Chases'?" By this time Noelle had reached the upper floor and Mrs. O'Brien interrupted herself with a series of ardent kisses.

"I must see how you look after last night, you angel! Never do I hope to be so proud of anybody. But, oh Noelle dear, what I really sent for you

for is Matt," and the girl saw the shine of quick tears in the topaz coloured eyes.

"You are to go in at once and see him," Mrs. O'Brien went on rapidly, "and I want you to know beforehand of the change. What Dr. Hartlieb has done for us, dear, in these few days no words can tell! Noelle, Matt is going to be made all over! I really believe it. Dr. Hartlieb has known worse cases than his which have been almost cured and there is a treatment he has seen used in the hospitals in Agra that Matt has never tried. Dr. Hartlieb will have to start for the west to-morrow, but when he comes back he is going to simply give himself up to using these different processes. The very best of all is that Matt himself believes in him, adores him almost, and has taken on the idea not only, Noelle, that he can be active again, by and

by, but that he can do a lot of things now which he had given up entirely. Oh, we are too happy!" and tears ran unchecked down Mrs. O'Brien's face.

Noelle had time to reply only by a fervent embrace before she was drawn into the upper library. The great invalid chair stood empty. At the far end of the room on a stool of peculiar construction Mr. O'Brien sat before a microscope, at work. Noelle had never seen him before out from the shadowy seclusion of his chair. Her first sensation was of the extraordinary nobleness of his head, her second of the fact that his disfigured face, when seen in the open, was so dominated by the power of the eyes and brow as to be far less painful than in the shadows with their suggestion of an all-too terrible destruction.

He waved her a greeting with a free

and buoyant gesture of his right hand. The hand wore a glove of thinnest kid, so delicate as not to interfere with his work, Mrs. O'Brien told Noelle later, another of Dr. Hartlieb's suggestions.

"I am at work, Miss Motte," Matt said with strong significance. "There is nothing better to my knowledge. Is there to yours?"

Noelle shook her head, tears of sympathy and gladness forbidding words, for a moment.

"So you like my dear friend Dr. Hartlieb?" she contrived to say a little later. Matt meanwhile worked busily away and his wife hovered around him like some radiant and joyous humming bird.

"He is a scientific man. He is also a seer," said Matt soberly, "a physician for soul and body both. We have gotten rid of enough morbid nonsense

in the four days he has been here in the house to equip a neurasthenic sanitarium. Haven't we, Cornelia?"

"We certainly have," cried Mrs. O'Brien with a ripple of happy laughter. "Imagine, Noelle,—Matt, this is so funny that I must tell on you,—my husband actually imagined himself jealous of—Dr. Tiffany!" And a glance of manifold significance was shot athwart into Noelle's eyes.

The girl coloured deeply.

"We know what we know about Dr. Tiffany, don't we, Mottley?" added her friend.

"I think I know more about him than any one, even you," Noelle responded with a deeper seriousness than was looked for. "Dr. Hartlieb is a very wonderful man, Mr. O'Brien, but Dr. Tiffany may be not less noble in certain ways. But I must run home," she added hastily, turning to

the door as if eager to escape further discussion. "It is long past noon."

"You will find Dr. Hartlieb there if you are quick enough," said Matt carelessly.

"What, at our house?" cried the girl astonished. "Did Maman expect him?" and not waiting for reply she hurried down the stairs and away from the O'Briens' house to her own in Gore Terrace.

At the door she encountered Dr. Hartlieb, leaving. A cloud of perplexity which she fancied on his face in her first glimpse of it passed as he saw and greeted her.

"When I knew you in India you were the sweetest child I ever saw, Miss Noelle," he said with a certain old world gallantry which became him, "and your womanhood is true to your childhood. I want to have a long talk

with you and find how much you remember of Agra still."

"Everything, Dr. Hartlieb!" cried Noelle fondly, "but there are so many questions I have to ask you."

A motion of Mrs. Motte's hand as she stood within the parlour door called Noelle's attention quickly to her mother's pallor and to her look of excessive uneasiness. Whether he observed it also or not, Dr. Hartlieb replied with unchanged cordiality and composure:

"I shall surely see you when I come back from the west, two weeks from now. I shall delay sailing for Naples on my return voyage to India a little in order to do something, if I can, for Mr. O'Brien. He is my old friend, you know, and such a splendid fellow—really a genius in his line, and with a great work before him I believe."

"It is most wonderful, the new life

you have brought them both, Dr. Hartlieb," returned Noelle earnestly, "I wish you could stay with us now and talk it over a little at luncheon."

"I wish I could, my dear, but I have an appointment now at once with Mr. Dane, who, by the way, is the finest lad I have met over here. Do you know he is considering going out to India to help in our work at Agra? He told me so early this morning and we must discuss it together thoroughly. Dane would be a tremendous accession to our force. Go and rest, Miss Noelle. You are tired, your face shows it. That was rather wonderful, I thought, which you did last night. Oh, the jasmine! It helped you? I am very glad. Mrs. O'Brien told me what was on, and I bethought me of the power of a perfume, so ransacked half a dozen greenhouses and found it.

Good morning, Mrs. Motte, good morning, Miss Noelle."

Closing the door Noelle stepped into the parlour. Her mother sat in a small, stiff chair, her hands dropped in her lap, her eyes fixed before her. The girl observed the strange brooding trouble in them with a cold quickening of her heart beat.

"Oh, Maman, my darling," she began with a strong effort to divert her mother's thought from whatever secret source of anxiety absorbed her, "I have just come from the O'Briens' and I never knew such a change as Dr. Hartlieb has brought into that house —it is pure joy and peace."

Mrs. Motte turned her eyes slowly until they rested in a wan and piteous gaze upon her daughter's face.

"Peace?" she said in a dull, toneless voice, "peace? there is no peace. He has come not to bring peace but

a sword— May he never come into my house again!"

"Oh, Maman, I am sure he is kind and good." Noelle, standing beside her mother, drew her head to rest against her and fondly smoothed the thickly waving white hair.

"He will try to turn you against me, Noelle," Mrs. Motte continued with a heartbreak in her voice. "He thought we were too happy here all by ourselves in our little home, so he came all the way from Agra to destroy us."

"No, no, darling," said Noelle, tears running down her own pale cheeks. "He could not spoil our happiness if he tried, nobody could. Nobody can turn me or take me from my precious little Mère Angelique. She is mine and I am hers for ever and for ever."

Mrs. Motte, covering her face with both hands, burst into vehement sobs of relief. Soon, however, looking up,

she smiled with quivering lips into the beautiful face bent with endless compassion above her.

"My Noelle never said a false word to her mother—" she began pathetically.

"Well, I should rather think not!" cried Noelle with a sudden change to matter-of-fact cheerfulness. "What a singular thing that would be for your Noelle to do, wouldn't it now? Come and lie down like a dear little lady. Why doesn't Katy call us to luncheon? I hope you have something good, Maman. You can't think how hungry I am."

"Will you sing, Noelle?" Mrs. Motte, white and exhausted, looked up from the sofa where she was now lying quietly with wistful eyes from which all light had fled.

Noelle turned to the piano. For a moment the muscles of throat and lips

were so rigid that speech was impossible. Meanwhile she turned over books and music with rapid motions, her eyes seeing nothing through a mist that lay before them. But presently she sang:

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
King Shepherd, turn their weary steps to thee.
Angels of Jesus, Angels of light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night.

"Angels sing on, your faithful watches keeping,
Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above;
Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,
And life's long shadows break in cloudless love."

Rising, Noelle saw that her mother slept. Katy came to the door to announce luncheon, but Noelle silenced her with uplifted finger.

"I have a note to write before luncheon," she whispered, "and mother is having her nap now. Come in in a few minutes and my note will

be ready for you to take out to the mail box."

The note, addressed to the Reverend William Dane, which Katy Duffy ran to post at the street corner that November noon, was as follows:—

"My Friend:

"I am told that it is your serious purpose to go to India. This is the best and the gladdest thing I know.

"None the less Warner Tiffany is greater than we, greater than I ever guessed until last night when he pleaded your cause, believing it meant happiness for us both. He knows better now, for I told him what I must tell you and none beside. For you have a right to demand light on the trouble which must for ever separate us, but alas! you will find the light darkness. Are we not all making our way through shadows and darkness,

pilgrims of the night? The words,—I have just sung them,—remain with me.

"Let me say what I must in few words.

"Years ago my dear mother suffered and she may again suffer, a mental malady which debars me, her child, from marriage. You will admit the finality of this fact. Still I am not sorry that I can love.

"Remember—no, forget—

"NOELLE."

XIV

"BIG Chief of the Clouded Brow, let loose your thunders! It is the first time I have seen you fly a distress signal. You have walked this floor in a fine fury for twenty minutes. Now I am ready to hear what's in the wind."

Dr. Hartlieb turned, paused in his pacing the floor of Mr. O'Brien's library and gazed at his friend steadily, unsmiling, as if measuring his capacity in some certain direction.

"I am bothered a bit, Matt, for a fact," he said abstractedly.

"Very well. Say on. I understand perfectly that you are in some sort of perplexity connected with the mysterious Mrs. Motte."

"Oh, you understand that, do you?"

asked Hartlieb with quickened attention. "Yes," he continued, slowly, throwing himself into a chair near the desk at which Matt was seated, "I am staggered as to what to do next. I have come from Agra to Pemberton, something of an excursion you observe, on a singularly important mission to the daughter of our great missionary David Motte. I see Mrs. Motte, lay the case before her, confident of her coöperation in what must be done, and am met with an emotional repulse and entreaties that not a word shall be said to her daughter. The opposition I do not rate of great importance, having known Mrs. Motte in the past to be of a highly sensitive organization. I expect it to pass and I leave Pemberton for two weeks. Yesterday I return, and designedly in Miss Motte's absence, go to the house. I am met by the message, given me by the little

maid at the door, that Mrs. Motte is wholly unable to see me or to communicate with me in any way whatever."

"She is ill, then?"

"No, the maid said she was around the house as usual."

"After all, Doctor, it is not so very surprising, considering all."

"All what?"

Matt had spoken with a quite unusual seriousness.

"This matter of Noelle's birth must have painful circumstances connected with it."

The Doctor looked hard at his friend, plainly astonished.

"What do you know of Noelle's birth?" he asked almost curtly. "The child knows nothing of it herself."

"I made up my mind months ago that she must be illegitimate."

"Wrong entirely. Nothing of the sort."

"She is, however, Eurasian. That you will not deny."

Hartlieb drummed on the arm of his chair and was silent.

"I have seen a likeness of David Motte, and I know Mrs. Motte personally,—one a sandy-haired New Englander, the other French but fair. Noelle cannot be the child of both of them," Matt declared concisely.

"She is the child of neither."

Having said this, the Doctor rose and again restlessly walked the room, Matt's eyes following him with keen expectancy.

"Tell me the story, old fellow," he said presently. "Let us take counsel together. I may be able, who knows? to help in some small way."

The Doctor crossed the room and bending gave Matt his hand in token of a pact between them of silence and service. Then, without a word, he took

from an inner breast pocket a brown linen envelope, opened it and laid on the desk before his friend two yellowed photographs. One showed the head and shoulders of an Englishman of about forty, in the uniform of a British artillery officer in India; the face was handsome but commonplace. The other was the likeness of a Eurasian girl of eighteen; the features were European, the eyes alone in their extraordinary beauty showed the strain of Oriental blood.

"Noelle's parents," Hartlieb said briefly.

Matt studied the two faces with absorbed interest.

"This is very beautiful," he said at last, lifting the second photograph and holding a reading glass above it. "Two-thirds English, I should say; the other third, what—?"

"Parsee, it is supposed,—the select

strain of the East—Persian that is, you know. She was called Naina. She is described as brilliant in mind as well as in person."

"A splendid heritage! No wonder our adorable Noelle is a genius with such a mother. The man married her, you say. From his face one would not expect it."

"He was not a bad sort, I judge. I never happened to see him, but he was a gentleman and a soldier. Of course those Indian marriages are not always distinctly remembered when a man goes back to England, but this man behaved rather well on the whole, it seems to me."

"Allow me to form an opinion also," said Matt, a touch of impatience in his irony.

"Yes. Where to begin?—"

"With the Mottes perhaps?"

"Very well. Motte, as you know,

was a missionary of the Board stationed in Agra, where he met and married Mademoiselle Angelique Fabre, the daughter of a French merchant, resident in Calcutta."

"The present Mrs. Motte?"

"Yes. I met them first in Mussoorie in the Himalayas where they came for the warm weather, that year—188—. They had been married then five years. Motte was a man of commanding ability,—a saint withal, of the militant variety, a knight with the cross on his heart instead of on his cloak. Mrs. Motte was charming, graceful, distingué; as you can see, she had a lovely face, still people always wondered why a missionary should have chosen her for a wife; certainly she is not and never was of the conventional type."

"That is probably the reason."

"Probably. They were a most in-

teresting pair certainly as I met them up there in the little mountain town where I was stationed in the—hospital. I had been then but two years in India and was already under appointment for the post in Agra where I am now."

"Had the Mottes children?"

"No. This had been a matter of excessive regret to Mrs. Motte, but when I became acquainted with them there in Mussoorie she was expecting her first confinement, and was buoyantly, pathetically happy in the fact. I attended her. The baby was a girl and the mother was rapturous—all her emotions always were of this overwrought, perilous pitch. She was, however, very ill; I was fearful of her recovery and her husband knew it. Still we hoped hard until, when it was a week old, the child died. Then the trouble went to the brain and Mrs. Motte became wildly delirious.

"Motte was heartbroken. I never saw a man in greater agony. He implored me to try anything, however desperate, to call his wife back to reason at least, if not to life; finally he suggested bringing a child from the hospital and trying the effect upon her. We both thought at once of a month-old baby whose mother had died in the hospital in childbirth."

Matt touched the faded photograph of Naina with his finger, and his eyebrows asked his question. Hartlieb nodded.

"The father," he said, "had gone back to England six months before, called by the unexpected death of his older brother to succeed to a title and an estate. He had left money with Naina, but plainly did not expect to see her again. No one looked for him to manifest interest in this motherless child. It was on the hospital to care

for, which meant a free hand for me in the matter. As an experiment I brought the little thing and placed it at Mrs. Motte's breast."

The Doctor paused, his rugged face tender with recollection.

"It saved her, of course," said Matt gently; "life and reason both."

The other bent his head in assent and continued: "Fully. There was no deception of the mother—no wish or chance for any indeed. Mrs. Motte's baby had died in her arms and every feature was impressed upon her memory unalterably. But she welcomed the little hospital waif with a heart-rending mother love and insisted upon adopting her for her own, only binding every one acquainted with the matter by a solemn promise never to reveal the fact that the child was not hers. Aside from ourselves, the head nurse at the hospital and Soonderbai, Mrs.

Motte's ayah, no one knew the circumstances and her wish has been sacredly followed. She had an unconquerable conviction, which seems to have become the master passion of her life as I see her now, that the child would not fully return her love unless believing herself her own."

"Mrs. Motte is a curious psychological study to me,—always has been," commented Matt. "She struck me the first time I saw her as having the peculiar, imperious charm of the person who has always had power to impose her own will upon every one about her."

"Your diagnosis is accurate. Such a person is sure to be fascinating—"

"But sure to be dangerous," added Matt musingly. "Such a woman will accept the most vital of sacrifices as a matter of course."

"There was still one thing in the

way," continued the Doctor with only a glance to show his acquiescence, "before the Mottes could rest fully in their hearts' desire. I insisted upon communicating with the child's father, now Lord Statham, in England, and without naming the Mottes, asking his full surrender of the child. On this account there was a long delay, and it was only on Christmas Day that I received the letter of consent from Statham, the first and last he appears to have written in the matter. That day I was able to take Mrs. Motte the news that the child was hers."

"And they named her Noelle," said Matt, with a smile which made his marred face almost beautiful. "What next?"

"Next, quiet, wholesome happiness in the earnest, beneficent life divided between Agra and for the warm weather Darjeeling—the Mottes never

went to Mussoorie again. But when Noelle was perhaps thirteen, Motte's health failed. He did not know, as I did, that he was doomed, but counted himself on furlough when he came over here with wife and child, and went for rest to his native village in Maine. He died there something like a year later. I received papers promptly and wrote to Mrs. Motte several times, but never heard from her. The years between her husband's death and the present time are unknown to me, save as I infer from results that she must have devoted herself successfully to the care and training of this singularly lovely Noelle. Her health I perceive is seriously impaired and the possibility which I foresee, rightly or wrongly, that she will not live many months makes me hesitate to push things to a conclusion against her wishes."

"What has happened?"

"This:—Statham died about a year ago, having married and leaving a son. In process of time I received from his lawyer a letter acquainting me with the fact that in his will Noelle was acknowledged as his legitimate child and the sum of £10,000 was left in my hands for her with the explicit charge that she should be told of her parentage. In case she could not be found or had died in the intervening years, this legacy was to remain in my hands for use in the Agra Christian hospital."

"Well, well! this is a situation. It obliges you to press the matter whether you will or no. I suppose there is no one else to act—no one living but yourself who understands the matter from the beginning."

"No one but myself and Mrs. Motte and she ranges herself sharply against me. But you see I cannot drop it on

account of her hysterical notion that Noelle will love her less when she knows the facts."

"Clearly you cannot."

"So then, to go back. I wrote at once and repeatedly to the old address of the Mottes in Maine, but received no answer. At length I discovered through indirect sources that Mrs. Motte and Noelle were both still living and here in Pemberton. I wrote again; still no answer, although I gave some hint of the nature and importance of my purpose. Then I decided to come."

"And coming you find yourself no nearer—"

"I hear you speak of coming," cried Mrs. O'Brien's voice at the door which at the moment she had opened, "and it is certainly high time. The carriage is waiting to take us for our drive, Dr. Hartlieb. Have you forgotten your

promise to drive with me at three? Here is something for you, just delivered," and she handed him a note which had plainly not come by post. "The girl who brought it is waiting for an answer."

Without pausing to speak the Doctor broke open the envelope. As he read a shade of surprise crossed his face.

"Dear lady," he said, to Mrs. O'Brien, "to my sincerest regret I cannot have the pleasure of driving with you this afternoon. Commands are laid upon me to come for afternoon tea, and to come early, to 78 Gore Terrace."

Matt turned a look of startled inquiry to his friend.

"Yes," Hartlieb added soberly, glancing again through the note; "Mrs. Motte appears most desirous of a chance to talk over old times in Agra

together and begs me not to disappoint her."

Turning to the desk, he wrote a hasty line which Mrs. O'Brien sent at once down to the waiting messenger.

"Since you are so suddenly snatched from me," commented the lady, this business transacted, "since you prefer the society of Another, Dr. Hartlieb, I don't see but I may as well go to my Club which meets at this hour."

"The thing to do, lady love, beyond a doubt," said her husband and she left without observing the puzzled abstraction in his eyes.

"A r a p i d bouleversement, my friend," said Hartlieb, turning for an instant as he followed her from the room.

XV

AT four o'clock Mrs. O'Brien sat with a dozen other women in the fragrant warmth of the richly appointed library of a Ridge Road mansion, listening soberly to an essay on Charles Lamb, read by a pretty woman in gorgeous raiment.

At the sound of a light step Mrs. O'Brien turned her head and seeing Noelle seeking to slip into the room unobserved, caught her hand and with her charming, wilful smile drew her down to a place on the sofa by her side.

The reader lowered her manuscript, having finished, ten minutes later and yielded her chair to another who was

to take up the subject of Mary Lamb. There was a moment's interval.

"How lovely to see you here, girl," cried Mrs. O'Brien affectionately. "I suppose your classes are over for the day."

"Yes, and my last one was by good luck just across the street. It was late, but I did want to run in for a little while."

"Isn't it fine Dr. Hartlieb has come back?"

"I didn't know he had," Noelle said starting nervously as if to rise, then dropping back.

"Oh, didn't you? Yes indeed, and he has given me the cut direct. He has gone to tea with your mother this afternoon instead of driving with me. What do you think of that?"

As Noelle made no response Mrs. O'Brien went on.

"Your mother is absolutely the

most fascinating little lady, Noelle! Men are always wild over her, aren't they? Here comes Katy with a charming billet doux from her to Hartlieb, the potent grave and reverend Doctor, bidding him come and talk of old times over a cup of tea, and, *voila*, every other plan is thrown over—"

Noelle had risen. Mrs. O'Brien saw then that she was for some obscure reason agitated.

"What, not leaving?" she cried. "Not going to stay and hear the story of poor Mary Lamb?"

"Hush, *please* dear! I would rather *not* hear about Mary Lamb. Strange isn't it? I ought really to help Maman if she has a guest, you see. I know it would be better—" here Noelle ceased her would-be unconcerned but fragmentary explanations and quietly escaped to the dressing room. A moment later Mrs. O'Brien from the win-

dow saw her walk rapidly away, anxiety plainly stamped upon her face.

As she passed on alone through the streets in snow and wind Noelle assured herself constantly that her nameless anxiety was without foundation but no assurance sufficed to silence the questions which disturbed her. Why should her mother, after repeated declarations of her dislike and distrust of Dr. Hartlieb, of her desire never to see him again, send Katy post haste, in her absence and unknown to her, to invite him to the house? Why her abnormal fear and her inconsequent seeking of her husband's best friend? What could it mean but fresh trouble? the trouble which had shadowed all her girlhood and had forbidden love and all the best of life to her?

Turning a corner by an apothecary's, Noelle was startled afresh to see Katy herself coming from the shop,

evidently in great haste, a small parcel in her hand. Calling her name, Noelle caught up with her and asked breathlessly what she had come for.

"For some medicine for your mother, Miss Noelle," said the girl, who was white and breathless with excitement. "That Dr. Hartlieb sent me. He is there with her now."

"Tell me every single thing, Katy, that you know," said Noelle low and urgently, and they hurried on side by side, Katy telling as they went in broken, disconnected phrases what had happened at the cottage.

The chain of events was as follows: During the morning, while Noelle had been out, Mrs. Motte had appeared nervous and excited; she had spent hours searching for something through trunks and boxes in the dark, low-roofed store-room under the eaves. Katy had begged her not to stay in

the cold, to let her find what she wanted, but she became irritable at every such suggestion.

Noelle remembered that her mother had looked unusually careworn at luncheon and had hardly spoken. She went from the table to take her nap as usual, and Noelle supposed her asleep when she again left the house for her afternoon lessons, charging Katy to take the closest care of her. She now found that, as soon as she was gone, her mother had again begun her unexplained searching which had ended at the mahogany secretary in the dining room. When Katy came in to put away silver she saw her bending over a disordered open drawer, a small filagree silver case in her hand which she hid hurriedly in the front of her dress. The girl noticed that she was much flushed, but sat down at once at her desk and wrote a note, sending her

in haste to deliver it at Mr. O'Brien's.

On her return Katy found that Mrs. Motte had prepared the small teak-wood table in the parlour for afternoon tea with fastidious care and was upstairs dressing. When she read the note which Katy brought her she turned so white that the girl thought she was about to fall. From that moment she seemed extremely confused, unable to dress without help, or to speak intelligibly. Within a half-hour Dr. Hartlieb rang the bell and was received in the parlour. In the tiny house it was impossible for Katy to avoid hearing what Mrs. Motte said in the conversation which followed, as her voice was unnaturally raised, and she repeated certain phrases over and over, such as, "Noelle does not want money!" "Promise me not to tell

her!" "Do you want to make me a stranger to my child?"

In a few moments Mrs. Motte came out from the parlour and asked Katy if the tea was ready. The girl was greatly alarmed at her wild expression as she snatched a silver water jug from her hand and turned back to the parlour, she herself following with the tray. Dr. Hartlieb stood beside the tea table holding up, on a level with his face, the same tiny case of green glass set in silver filagree which Katy had seen Mrs. Motte take from the secretary drawer. It appeared to have been lying partly hidden under some cup or plate on the table and there discovered by him.

The box, opened by a spring, lay in his hand and as Mrs. Motte entered the parlour, Dr. Hartlieb with a smile blew from it a small quantity of a brownish

powder and said very pleasantly and "easy like," Katy thought,

"Excuse me, there is a little dust in this box, Mrs. Motte. What a charming little thing it is. You must have brought it with you from India."

As he laid the box down Mrs. Motte sprang toward him and confronted him with terror in her eyes, then burst into laughter which Katy said made her cry, uttered a few incoherent exclamations and fainted. Dr. Hartlieb caught her in his arms, carried her up-stairs and laid her on the bed, oh, so tenderly, Katy said, as if she had been a baby he had put to sleep; then sent her running to the apothecary for something he wrote the name of on a paper.

Noelle sat by the bed as she had sat for long hours; Doctor Hartlieb was in the shadows beyond. Mrs. Motte opened her eyes and smiled faintly.

"I had a terrible dream, dear," she whispered. "Sing the pilgrim song; then I shall rest."

Sweet and strong and steady Noelle's voice sounded through the mysterious stillness:

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to thee.
Angels of Jesus, Angels of light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night."

. . . . . .

Afterwards, in the room below, Noelle spoke with Dr. Hartlieb. Calmness as of victory was in the girl's eyes; tears would have their way later.

"Yes," she answered him, "there were two hard years,—hopeless almost,—after my father's death. Since then she has been perfectly herself. But never, at the worst, was fear of harm from her before. That powder—oh,

Dr. Hartlieb, were you really in danger? What did it mean? What was it?"

"It was nothing more than a strong Indian opiate, my girl; not a safe thing, but in that amount not dangerous. It meant simply an image in her 'dreadful dream' of my having come to destroy her peace, your love. Let it never be spoken of again. I foresaw something of that nature when I found her condition. It was to be expected. What grieves me most is that this collapse should have been brought on by my coming."

"It was liable to recur at some time, they told me. I have known that all these years, but I hoped for the happy outcome."

"Had she spoken of me, of my letters, before my coming?"

"Never. I knew that several times she received letters from India of

which she said nothing. Once I saw her burn one unopened. After these came, I recall now, she was often melancholy, sometimes a little excited. After you arrived I saw she was in constant fear. But why was she in such fear of you? To that I could never gain the least clue. It was all a mystery, perhaps all a delusion. I cannot understand."

"What she feared was all delusion; what remains is good and beautiful. Soon you shall understand. Now will you promise, Noelle, to thank God to-morrow, as I know you do to-day, for our good friend Death?"

"I promise."

XVI

"I THOUGHT you would give me my luncheon to-day, Mrs. O'Brien."

"Truly it is a comfort to have you come. I am chilled through, body and spirit. I want some one to talk with and Matt has not quite reached the point of coming down to the table."

An hour before these two, Mrs. O'Brien and Dr. Tiffany, had stood with a small company gathered about an open grave in a storm swept cemetery.

"So Noelle did not come back with you?"

"No. I came from that desolate place all alone." The lady shivered slightly.

"May I go up and speak to Matt for just a moment?"

"By all means. I know he wants to see you, Dr. Tiffany. But don't stay up there long, please. Luncheon is really ready."

A few moments later Mrs. O'Brien and her unexpected guest were seated tête-à-tête at a delicately appointed table, with the fragrance of many roses and the leaping flames of a hearth-fire to combat the winter within them and without.

"You were asking about Noelle," Mrs. O'Brien said, as soon as grace was over; "the sweet thing asked to be allowed to go to her own little home quite alone, except for Katy, for to-day."

Dr. Tiffany nodded with gravely tender approval.

"Probably that is better for one like her, being clear in her spiritual vision and very sure in her poise, singularly

so in view of her family history. But don't let her stay alone too long, Mrs. O'Brien. The child is,—I suppose,—frail human after all, though at times it seems hard to believe it."

"Did she not look wholly angelic as she stood there, so alone, so brave, so young, this noon?" Mrs. O'Brien's voice shook a little. "Do not imagine that I shall leave her alone long, Dr. Tiffany. I am going to send the carriage for her at five o'clock, for her and Dr. Hartlieb. He will be there by that time."

"Oh, Dr. Hartlieb is to see Noelle this afternoon?"

"Yes. He has to see her, for he is to tell her—everything," and Mrs. O'Brien drew a breath as of relief from prolonged tension. "It simply cannot be put off any longer," she added.

"And what *is* 'everything'? I believe it is time that I should be en-

lightened also. We have all been at the centre or circumference of a mysterious,—in the end, a tragic,—drama, but I confess I have been too much at the circumference myself to interpret much of what I have dimly seen."

"Yes, it is a tragedy," said Mrs. O'Brien thoughtfully, resting her chin on one hand, and turning away from the food which she had all along failed to notice. "A tragedy of egotism, a fearful admonition."

"Ah! Is it so? However I must insist, tragedy apart, dear lady, on your eating a bit of the chicken and taking a glass of milk. You look utterly spent and you are not even pretending to eat."

Mrs. O'Brien looked up with a childish pleading in her beautiful face.

"No, I shall not let you off," was the pastor's inflexible response. "Do as you are bid and,—we will proceed."

Obediently and in silence the lady ate her morsel, then, seeing that her guest had no more interest in lunching than herself she rose and led the way back to the library, the maid following them with coffee.

Dr. Tiffany dropped into a deep wicker arm chair, took his cup from the tray, then looked across at his hostess with an expression which said plainly that he waited for her to speak.

Mrs. O'Brien leaned her head back against the dark leather cushion of her library chair and drew her eyelids narrowly in languid musing.

"Mrs. Motte," she said slowly, "was a woman of quite phenomenal refinement and charm, she was passionately maternal, she would have died for Noelle cheerfully, but—she had not the smallest scruple in exacting the girl's whole life as a sacrifice

to herself, and, Dr. Tiffany, after all, she was *not* Noelle's mother."

For once the lines of the clergyman's massive and imperturbable face relaxed to the betrayal of a poignant amazement, but he did not speak.

Rapidly Mrs. O'Brien set forth the facts of Noelle's birth, adoption, the acknowledgment of her by Lord Statham and his bequest, sent through Dr. Hartlieb and rejected by Mrs. Motte.

Dr. Tiffany listened with intense attention, swift perceptions and deductions leaping to life in his mind.

"Noelle then is released from her vow never to marry." This was his supreme conclusion, the tale being told. But the sudden lustre in his eyes faded even as it rose, the thought of Dane dimming the joy into which he could enter only as a man defeated may rejoice in the victory of the man who wins.

"This explains many things, Mrs. O'Brien," he remarked, after brief silence, with an effort of energy. "Yes, many things."

"It explains obviously, in view of the tyranny of Mrs. Motte's love for Noelle," she returned, "her curious, abnormal dread of Dr. Hartlieb and the revelation he had come to make to the child. But it does not explain her aversion to Mr. Dane, her effort to keep him away from Noelle. That can only be interpreted, it seems to me, by the one clue which fits every turn of this strange labyrinth,—the lady's incredible, consuming selfishness."

"Speak gently of the dead, Cornelia," said Dr. Tiffany quietly.

She bent her head, rebuked, and was silent.

"He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her."

The words were murmured as if the

speaker repeated them unconsciously, lost in thought.

"Some of us are erring more sadly than the poor soul who has just outsoared the level of our night. Her sins are forgiven, be sure; she loved much. How about the consuming selfishness of some of us others, more oppressive, maybe, than was hers, of us who have the light of reason to restrain our impulses, to guide us?"

"The light of reason?" cried Mrs. O'Brien, painfully startled and perplexed. "Surely you do not fancy that poor Mrs. Motte—"

"I do not fancy. The facts are sorrowful enough. I had taken it for granted that Noelle would have told you, as she has told me, the story of Mrs. Motte's past, of her recurrent insanity."

"Not a word," replied Mrs. O'Brien, now strongly agitated. "If this is

true Noelle is even more wonderful than I knew."

"She has had need and occasion to be wonderful. Mrs. Motte, years ago, after the death of her husband, was acutely insane for a year or two. You can see that it has been a stern enough situation for a girl of Noelle's age, all along, and particularly during these last few weeks. Mrs. Motte had, supposedly, recovered her mental balance, yet there was always an underlying excitability which Noelle discovered was stirred by any mention of Mr. Dane or Dr. Hartlieb, the two objects of her morbid dread. With Dr. Hartlieb her excitement in the end took the form of an outbreak of homicidal mania. Being in a state of physical exhaustion the reaction killed her."

"How terrible, and how completely

undreamed of! I supposed Mrs. Motte died from a sudden shock."

"Just as well. She did, in fact."

"But—can you tell me more?" faltered Mrs. O'Brien. "I am sure Noelle would be willing. I almost wonder that Dr. Hartlieb has not said a word."

"He never will. Noelle gave me the barest outline. You perceive that up to this moment even she is herself unable to discern any basis for her mother's mania of fear of Hartlieb. She only knows the fact. They have traced back and found it clear at least that this fear culminated in a sudden onset of emotional insanity. When Mrs. Motte sent for Hartlieb that afternoon, I can now see perfectly,—since you have supplied the missing links,—it was with the determination to persuade him to go back to India

without making known this mission of his to Noelle. Failing that she appears to have fixed it in her mind to give him, in a cup of tea, an Indian powder, a strong narcotic, which she believed of fatal potency. Of course it was a perfectly insane purpose, and the fact that she was mistaken in the probable effects of the powder was only in proportion to the exaggeration of ideas characteristic of her condition."

"How did Dr. Hartlieb guess such a wild project? How did he thwart it?"

"I fancy it was not difficult to conjecture it, for a man of his experience, although he had never, until that interview, suspected Mrs. Motte's sanity. I do not know the details but simply, when the lady left the room for a moment, his suspicions being aroused and the possibility of homi-

cidal mania suggesting itself on the instant, he glanced over the things on the tea table, half expecting to find something indicative of a desperate purpose. She returned just as he threw away the powder, treating it as if it were a matter of no consequence; but she, seeing her poor little melodramatic plot detected, flew into a climax of excitement, followed almost at once by collapse. Alas, poor lady! Truly it is a pitiful story!"

"It is inconceivable!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Brien. "Such a gentle, shrinking, delicate woman! I simply cannot make myself believe it."

Dr. Tiffany raised his eyebrows expressively.

"It is not necessary to believe it," he returned quietly. "However, since it chances to be true it is a mighty aid in reconciling Noelle to the sudden end of a life which could not, in the

nature of things, fail to be full of suffering."

"Yes, yes, I see. Oh what a merciful release, and oh, Dr. Tiffany, the joy of knowing that there is no hereditary taint—that my poor girl may know her real parentage this very day, may know that she is released from that cruel bondage! Do you suppose Dr. Hartlieb is with her now?" Mrs. O'Brien's mind was now leaping to conclusions. Her cheeks, hitherto unnaturally pale, had suddenly flushed high and she made rapid gestures eloquent of gratitude and release with her slender hands.

"You are getting excited, Cornelia," admonished Dr. Tiffany. "For the sake of all things good avoid exaggerated emotions. Can't we get that lesson at least out of all this?"

"I will try," was the meek reply. "But do, Dr. Tiffany, tell me when

Noelle first confided this trouble to you."

"You remember the night at Mrs. Bishop's when Noelle gave us her conception of the Hindu woman?"

"Remember? I should hardly forget. And you took her home that night,—pulled wires, I remember, to obtain the chance."

"Precisely." Dr. Tiffany's expression was inscrutable now. "My reasons for this particular piece of wire-pulling were perhaps a shade less malicious than usual with me. I had seen Dane and seen Noelle—just broken apart after an interview which left marks of significance and pain."

Mrs. O'Brien bent a little forward now, her eyes fixed steadily on the clergyman's face, wonder dawning visibly in them.

"I saw that what youngsters of their age call love had got them in a

mortal grip and that there was some barrier in the way. This I took to be an old childish vow of Noelle's girlhood, never to marry. I had run up against the same thing not so long ago in propria persona, the difference being that she and I were not for taking ourselves quite so seriously. Outwardly at least. Well, as you can gather, I thought it rather a pity for two young lives to be blighted and all that sort of thing, so I decided to constitute myself Noelle's fatherly friend and talk her out of her sentimental scruples which I took to have originated in the death of some gentle swain of her teens."

"Dr. Tiffany! and you pretend to be an egotist! At last you are unmasked."

"Rubbish, Mrs. O'Brien, begging your pardon. My own chance was gone, you see. I stood to lose nothing

or I shouldn't have done it, be sure. And so, when I urged Dane's suit in somewhat cogent terms as we drove down the avenue that night, the girl laid bare that pitiful story of their past, the shadow resting on the present, the clutch on her future, from the hereditary taint."

"And you supposing her correct in the premises could not conscientiously argue her down after you knew," reflected Mrs. O'Brien.

"No. I thought she was ethically right, scientifically right, though taxing her human nature and Dane's something beyond the limit."

"Does Mr. Dane know the real reason why Noelle would not marry?"

"Oh yes, that was his due. She was forced to tell him. He was prepared for it in a way, for this reason: Mrs. Motte had stolen from her own house one night after she was sup-

posed to have retired and had come to our parish house in a public carriage, trying to find Dr. Hartlieb. She seems to have vibrated between an intense desire to see and sound him as to his purposes and an equally strong determination to avoid him. That night the positive impulse was driving her, poor soul. She was so evidently under the influence of some morbid prepossession, her manner was so singular, her action so little suited to her character, that Dane, who happened to be in the parish house and met her, half feared some serious trouble."

"How did Noelle ever dare to bring Mrs. Motte here and establish her under the circumstances?"

"Well, you see the woman had been pronounced cured and it was hoped permanently. She was lonely and unhappy apart from Noelle. The bond

between the two was as strong, as indestructible, as the bond between Charles and Mary Lamb. Only there were differences. Mrs. Motte, for instance, never suspected her own infirmity. She knew that Noelle intended never to marry, in fact the girl had promised her she would not, but this appeared to Mrs. Motte a perfectly natural procedure on account of the supreme and absorbing character of their relation as mother and daughter."

"Ah Noelle, Noelle!—she has been heart-breakingly wise, tragically tender for every one but herself."

With these words Mrs. O'Brien burst into tears. Dr. Tiffany suffered her to find this relief without interruption from him. For once at least he seemed to regard tears as a justifiable indulgence.

Presently he rose and measured the

room with long, slow steps, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. Mrs. O'Brien, lifting tear-dimmed eyes, saw, or fancied she saw, a vague change in his bearing, in the lines of face and figure,—a drooping, dispirited weariness. The hopeless sadness of the situation for him smote her as it never had when the mask of satire and cynicism had concealed the heart of the man. The pain of it was charged with a solemnity which put an end to the slighter emotion to which she had just yielded.

She rose and intercepted him on his return from a journey to the far recesses of the library, with an expressive outstretched hand.

He took it in silence and smiled faintly, then glancing at the clock in the corner he said, releasing the hand,

"Three o'clock is it? Dane next,—Dane to tell me officially that he ab-

hors the excellency of Jacob and hates his palaces, and is about to turn to the Gentiles."

"What can you mean! Good bye if you must go."

"Nothing, nothing but words. Only, —good bye dear lady,—it takes a good deal of a man to live this life even half way decently. Notice that."

XVII

WHEN Noelle turned from the new made grave that morning, William Dane took her hand and led her to her carriage.

She did not know whose hand hers rested in until the carriage door was closed. Then she lifted her eyes and saw Dane's face white and solemn with the stress of his sympathy. Tears, warm and free, sprang to her eyes for the first time.

"If I could only help you!" he said under his breath.

"I am helped," she replied simply. "In all this God is very present."

"But I may see you—soon," he said urgently.

"Yes, once before you leave for India. Good bye."

Her look said as plainly as words that one meeting before the final separation would be all that she could bear.

Dane drew back, then stood to watch the carriage as it rolled away; had a glimpse of Katy, the only person with Noelle, even saw her clasp her mistress's small, black-gloved hand with ardent tenderness in both her own. He turned then, blindly almost, into a sombre, fir-locked by-path and walked through its untrodden snow to the remote outskirts of the burial ground, that he might escape speech with others of the small company.

Dane had read, with a tumult of revolt, Noelle's letter in which she had disclosed the barrier between them. Deeper thinking and a more unselfish apprehension of the girl's sense of responsibility in the matter had brought him, however, to submission to her

will. Then, swift and sharp, had come the shock of Mrs. Motte's death. One, the only visible, barrier between him and Noelle was removed, and again he had been forced to fight for the moral conquest which he imagined won. And now, as he saw Noelle surrounded by the stern presentments of death, with the only human being who had claimed her or undertaken for her hidden for ever from her sight, the conflict was renewed in full force. For as he saw the girl in her patience, her sorrow, her piteous loneliness, all the strength of his manhood rose in a storm of rebellion against the conditions, so intangible yet so tyrannous, which forbade him, who loved her supremely, to stand by her now, to enter into her sorrow, to fill up the emptiness of her life.

Intensely preoccupied, Dane reached a small iron gate which gave access

through the massive wall of the place to a secluded lane. He found the gate locked, an incident to which he was wholly indifferent. Half mechanically he retraced his steps and walked for hours between the white-sheeted graves, by the heavily bordered alleys of the silent enclosure, scarcely realizing his surroundings, and the flight of time not at all. Faint with hunger and spent with emotion he came out at length through a vaulted entrance upon an unfamiliar suburban street. He had aroused to a sense of his remoteness from the centre of things, to the fact that he had eaten nothing since his morning coffee and that long, tiresome miles lay between him and home. He walked on down the street, under the shadow of the high cemetery wall, hardly knowing in which direction to look for a car line. A big burly labourer busily at work laying a bit of

pavement over which Dane must make his way, looked up, then, touching his hat, rose awkwardly to his feet with the greeting,

"Mr. Dane! Pleased to see you, sir." Dane recognized Katy Duffy's father and returned his welcome with a wan though cordial smile. Duffy's reformation had been Dane's real achievement in Pemberton. By his personal efforts and influence the latent good in the man had been aroused; he had quit drinking and had become a decent sort of fellow and a capable labourer.

"Something seems to ail you, sir," Duffy remarked next, looking with surprise at the minister's haggard face. "Was you to the funeral, the lady's funeral where my Katy works, that turned in yonder a spell ago?"

Dane nodded.

"Then it looks as though you hain't

had a chance to take a bite, if you've had to stay there among them tombs ever senst. I suppose it's up to you parsons to stan' by and set up a few prayers extry when the folks are swells. Set down, Mr. Dane. You ain't feelin' well for a fact."

Dane dropped obediently upon a cask of cement and watched without curiosity the motions of his impromptu host of the pavement.

In the gutter a small fire of charcoal was burning in a brazier, for heating irons with which to loosen frozen stones. Over this fire Duffy, with clumsy but practiced motions, hung a tin can which he had drawn from under his shabby coat, laid on a strip of grass beneath the wall. A tin cup was ready to hand and a thick sandwich of bread and cheese was produced from,—precisely where Dane was not minded to inquire. He rather thought

Duffy's trouser pocket. In two minutes the cup of steaming coffee and the sandwich were silently presented to him by a stained, frost-bitten hand with a sturdy kindliness which rose superior to apology.

Dane looked up at the man's coarse, weather beaten features, a sense of brotherhood warming his heart and quickening its languid pulsation.

"Mighty good of you, old fellow."

"Don't say a word. It'll kinder hit the spot mebbe."

That was all. Duffy returned to his mallet and crowbar and Dane consumed his food and drink with a sense that nothing had ever "hit the spot" perfectly before.

Duffy, watching his face furtively, saw its colour return with a profound sense of satisfaction. He had adored Dane ever since the young minister had knocked him down on a certain

night and the morning thereafter had given him what he himself described as the "hell-fer-sartinest straight goods of a lecture as he'd ever listened to." The chance to talk with this friend was eagerly improved.

"Beats all, sir, how my Katy thinks the world an' all of Miss Motte," he began. "She'll never leave her agin, never, not sence the old lady's up an' died. She'll stick to her, an' it's right she should. Miss Motte's done the square thing by Katy. It kinder struck me, made me smile here all to myself, when the percession went along to the cemetery here just about noon. I knew 'twas doo to come an' I kinder kep' my eyes open. An' there, sir, sure's I stan' here, in the chief mourners' carriage, on the cushions, set my Katy, a holdin' of Miss Motte's hand an' supportin' of her, as you might say. An' of course

'twouldn't 'ev done, not on the way in, fer Katy to have winked an eyelash my way nor seemed to notice nothin', along o' bein' chief mourners an' sech as that. But comin' out of a buryin' ain't the same thing as goin' in. They gen'lly chirks up a bit, an' it's right they should. I'd ben pleased, sir, to hev had you see Katy when they druv back along an' passed me. Pretty close up they come an' goin' slow. An' ef she didn't drop the winder an' say, 'Why there's father!' an' wave out her hand to me as ef,—well, Mr. Dane, same's ef I'd *ben* a father to her—" At this point Duffy produced a red cotton handkerchief and took refuge in its folds. Then, with a raucous cough, he turned back to his work.

"Katy is a good girl, Duffy."

"She's a darned good girl, Mr. Dane, an' it's none of my doin's

neither, as yerself knows. The least I can do now is to stand one side an' keep out the way of her gittin' up in the world a little bit."

As Duffy was speaking a clock on the tower of the chapel behind the wall in whose shadow they stood, struck the hour, three. With a flash Dane remembered his appointment to meet Dr. Tiffany for conference at that hour. Calling back a hasty word to Duffy he dashed down the street and boarded a passing car headed towards the city's centre.

XVIII

IT was nearer four o'clock than three when Dr. Tiffany's assistant, breathless, fagged and chagrined, presented himself in the luxurious library of his principal's residence for the interview for which he had intended to prepare himself with serious thought.

"Hello, Dane!" was Dr. Tiffany's welcome, as he rose from his place. "Where have you been? You look as if you had been running to a fire."

Dane smiled and bit his lip. He was dizzily tired.

"I have been at a fire, Dr. Tiffany," he replied slowly. "I am always at a fire now,—between two fires for that matter." Then, with a change of tone, "But I am awfully ashamed, sir, to

have failed of meeting my engagement on time and kept you waiting. The worst of it is that I haven't the ghost of an excuse to give, either."

"Sit down, my dear man. You are as welcome as if you had a whole brigade of ghosts. Get your breath and rest a bit while I do the talking. You appear to me to need a chance to rally to your next ordeal."

"Thank you, Dr. Tiffany."

The sorrowful grimness of Dane's face relaxed in response to this touch of sympathetic perception. There was a moment of silence and then Dr. Tiffany spoke.

"I am perfectly well aware that you requested this interview to-day because you wish to be released from your work here and I have an idea that you are thinking of India."

Dane nodded and the other went on.

"I can say all the conventional

things which might be said at such a juncture with perfect, really with unusual sincerity. I am extremely sorry to lose you; your work has been singularly effective in the parish, your personality exceptionally congenial to myself. Nevertheless, if you hear the call to the foreign field sounding louder, if you wish to go 'over into Macedonia and help us'—I dare not say you nay. And so forth, and so forth. Consider all this said. It is perfectly appropriate, perfectly true, and, perfectly immaterial. Now then, let us get down to the real thing."

Dane cast a swift glance over at the speaker, who leaned back in his great arm chair and fingered an ivory paper knife with careful deliberation, his face as impassive, as cynically benevolent as it was wont to be. What could be coming?

"The real thing, Dane, is that you

have had the idealist's dream of the Church, of the ministry, of the work of both, and their possibilities,—a dream corresponding very faintly to the reality. Like every other decent fellow who enters the ministry with an unselfish purpose the awakening to the hard, modern limitations of the life you have chosen comes with something of a crash. The average man swallows his surprise, conceals his wounds, adjusts his necessary compromises and goes on his way, not rejoicing particularly, but making his living at least. You, being a higher potency idealist than many, react more strongly, think it impossible to make the compromises pointedly indicated, and fly to evils that you know not of in Macedonia, hoping at least for a chance there to lay down your life. In Calvary Church you find conditions reversed. You see the church called upon to gain the

whole world and lose its own soul. Isn't that about it?"

For all Dane's experience of disillusion regarding Dr. Tiffany as a religious force, the power of the man's complex personality never ceased to impose itself upon him, never failed to command in him a reluctant reverence. It had been farthest from the young man's purpose to intrude at this or any other time upon his superior a suggestion of flaw or fault in the work of Calvary Church. Nevertheless, the present direct challenge striking sharply upon an exacerbated mental condition aroused his inner spirit of antagonism and drove him into unforeseen plainness in response.

"I have nothing to say, Dr. Tiffany," he began, "in criticism of Calvary Church and the methods employed here. They seem to be very much like the methods of the average

American church to-day, competitive and commercial, I suppose necessarily so. As far as I observe, the churches swing, in their activities, only slightly beyond an orbit of self-preservation, self-advancement, self-magnifying. There are sporadic exceptions of course. But you are perfectly right; I did not enter the ministry to become a 'promoter.' I am not interested in the Church as a business enterprise. I am not interested in it as a social club which requires the best club-house in the city for the gratification of its ambition and proof of its prosperity, and demands the very food of pale-faced little children at the hands of their fathers and mothers to build into the marbles and mosaics of its walls."

Dr. Tiffany's eyelids flickered slightly.

"Confine your comments, Mr. Dane,

in this particular, to the pastor of Calvary Church; it is not necessary to include the people. Of course, as we are bidding for a luxurious constituency, it becomes necessary to provide luxurious housing. That is the size of it. But, in point of fact, this club house enterprise, as you rather accurately characterize it, originates with me, is pushed by me, is my own creature, and is to be in the end, my monument—

> " 'All lapis, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
> My villas!'—

You recall the Bishop? "

Dane frowned harshly, seized with a species of moral consternation at the cynical allusion. Dr. Tiffany, wholly indifferent to the effect he had produced, went on, but with sudden force of emphasis.

" Mr. Dane, here is the point: in

religion I am, to be perfectly honest, which is well enough now and then, an epicure; you are a mystic. I am rather in favour of your seeking the foreign field, for I confess to a distaste for watching, at close range, the processes by which the second becomes the first."

Dane's colour changed and his hand's grip on the chair-arm tightened hard.

"Religion has become to me a certain attitude of mind towards the universe, philosophical and irenic,—for the rest, a matter of taste. To you, at present, it is a reality, a passion, a life."

Dr. Tiffany's voice had grown a trifle husky and had fallen to an unwonted key. Dane broke in with confused protest and conflicting emotion.

"I beg you, sir, not to humiliate me by placing me where I do not belong.

I know myself, well enough, for a raw novice. I have not yet won my spurs. I am your inferior. I do not constitute myself your critic. Heaven forgive me if I have seemed guilty of such presumption. And, if I might venture to say it, I have begun to perceive since I have been here, that the highest virtue may not be that conventionally associated with the 'minister of the Gospel.' The supreme Christly, human strength must have roots going deeper, self-conquest rising higher than anything which boys such as I have conceived of. You have shown me this, Dr. Tiffany." Dane rose as he spoke.

"Entirely unintentionally, my dear fellow, I assure you," replied the older man with his whimsical smile. "Sit down yet a minute. I know you are dead tired. It is unmerciful to keep you, but I am not quite done. You

are groping your way towards the new conceptions which must dawn. Some of us have missed the way, but, loving this present world, find satisfaction in giving up the search. You have spoken with severity of the Church and yet with force and with some truth. You remember how Gibbon said that the influence of the clergy *might* be usefully employed to assert the rights of humanity, but that very seldom has the banner of the church been seen on the side of the people. It is an old story, an old anomaly, though here and there are signs of change. But one thing should be clear to you. The notion that, because a man is identified with obviously and professionally religious activities, he is therefore on a higher human and moral plane than other men, goes to pieces. You used the term 'promoter' just now accurately. The promotion of ecclesiastical

interests may be precisely as much a matter of business as the promotion of real estate or cotton mills. The man pledged in all his outward energies to the pushing forward of Christ's kingdom may even become a self-righteous self-seeker and never know it. For it is a secret, unconscious process, the man himself seldom realizing how subtly the lines of self-advancement and church-advancement shade into each other. This is what I had in the back of my mind when I spoke of the mystic developing into—something else."

"When I decided to enter the ministry," returned Dane, speaking slowly and with hesitation, "I did so with full faith that here could be carried out the ideals of chivalrous and unselfish devotion to the common good. I still believe it; I love the ministry, the church. But I am awaking to the

danger in our profession of a narrow, mechanical type of self-giving. Why, their very religiousness seems to me sometimes to almost de-humanize our men! In our virtue we stand off stiffly, no matter what the crying need, if it is outside the precise lines of conventional evangelical effort, or may divert us from professional advancement. We are willing to sacrifice ourselves but it seems rather for the 'success' of the church than for the saving of the world. It baffles me, and yet I believe the church will rise to its greater mission yet."

"Perhaps," said Dr. Tiffany very soberly; "but not until God has had time to kill off, root and branch, the breed of the 'distinguished clergyman' and the notion of it in the minds of the younger men,—the brilliant preacher type, the dinner-and-after-dinner parson. My kind! We need to-

day a more profoundly human, a more vigorous and virile type of men. I tell you, Dane, the church has never sized up its job correctly since the days of Francis of Assisi, and then it was only a little knot of dreamers who caught on. I remember Francis had certain notions of his own on church building," he added drily.

"'How very hard it is to be
A Christian!'"

repeated Dane in an undertone.

"Hard? Yes. Very nearly impossible, my friend, even for one select soul, kept in training through generations of godly forbears. Then think of working the Christ ideal on a whole world lying in wickedness! It is a sterner struggle, a more awful precipice of purpose to scale than the universe ever witnessed or conceived. And we are going at it with coloured

sewing silks instead of cables, and straws instead of scaling ladders! God forgive us."

A long sigh like a groan escaped the clergyman's lips and revealed the depths within him which Dane had not sounded.

There was silence. Then flinging his head back with a strong movement Dr. Tiffany exclaimed,

"Get out, Dane, while you can and save yourself from the atrophy of religious professionalism. I had ideals once, myself. I can pass for having them now, on occasion. I can even fool myself sometimes for a little. I am sorry to drive you to India, but—"

Dane had risen again, bound to close a conversation which was becoming too strenuous for his endurance just then.

"It is not you who drive me to India, Dr. Tiffany. You are not the man I expected to find as the head of

Calvary Church when I came here, but you are, to my thinking, a greater man. I am going to India because there is work there I want to try to do." Overcoming a formidable shyness Dane continued, " Also I want to be out of sight and reach of the girl I love and—cannot win for wife. It has the note of a coward I confess. But, I can work for God in India, and it is where she lived—where her heart lives still. Something, some aura of her will dwell with me there;—I am fanciful enough at least to think so."

Dr. Tiffany had risen and walked beside his assistant to the door.

" Yes. Go to India, Dane. There is work there for a man like you. Perhaps when you have learned ' the way ' you will come back and show it to us others. But—listen now!—You will take Noelle Motte with you, Noelle herself, instead of her wraith. On the

whole you will find it more satisfactory."

"But that you see, sir, is impossible. I think you must understand—"

"Ask her again, lad, and see."

XIX

THE calendar on Dr. Tiffany's desk in the parish house study was set at February first. The desk was littered with architect's drawings. Dr. Tiffany had just pushed them away with a gesture of impatience and sat leaning back in his swivel chair in a brown, and by no means a golden brown, study. The cloud was dispelled as the outer door opened, following a light knock, and, unannounced, with the freedom of an habitué, Noelle Motte entered. She wore black without signs of mourning; her colour was brilliant from her walk in the keen air; there was less of sadness in her eyes than formerly, but a deeper tenderness.

"What in the world brings you

here?" asked Dr. Tiffany, taking her hands affectionately and seating her beside the desk.

"What a welcome! Something very important," she added firmly, her glance, however, less firm than her tone. "I am going to be married."

"I have been in training for weeks against this," he returned with a whimsical smile. "My moral muscle is in prime condition. So—what can I do for you?"

"Will you marry me then?" Noelle could not raise her eyes to his face just then.

"Certainly," his lips twitching slightly; "the irony of fate could have it no otherwise. Is the Cub in his usual luck? Is it to be soon?"

"A week from to-day, Dr. Tiffany, if that suits you."

"At the O'Briens'?"

"Yes, I am there now altogether,

you know. There will be no one but the family present, except Dr. Hartlieb."

"So he is in this country still. I thought he had sailed."

"He was to have gone two weeks ago but is staying on, for us. We are to sail with him the tenth."

"I am glad you can go to India, Noelle."

"Is it not beautiful!" Tears sprang to her eyes. "I was so homesick for it always, and now to have my best of life begin there and the chance to work for those dear people with him,—I am sure no one ever had so much joy—my heart almost breaks with it sometimes. If only Maman can know!"

"She knows. Do not doubt it. The joy is hers also."

These words were spoken with a rare gentleness which Dr. Tiffany manifested on occasion, but he re-

turned at once with a certain determination to the matter-of-fact tone which he found it wise to give the interview.

"Miss Motte, here's a point I long to know! The Wise Man from the East brought gifts as I am informed; gifts of a somewhat illustrious character, but I hear also that you are quixotic enough to decline them. Is this true? I hoped you had more sense."

"I have not been in the least quixotic, Dr. Tiffany. The gifts you speak of are placed in Dr. Hartlieb's hands in trust for the Agra Mission, but we —Mr. Dane and I—will draw our support from the income of them. Is not that clear, straight, common-sensible?"

"Did your brain produce such wisdom?"

"Mine and mine alone!" she cried

exulting, then with a sudden swift compunction, marking a suggestion of strain in his face, she laid her hand on his and said reproachfully,

"Why don't you show me those plans and talk to me about the new church? You never consult me any more?"

"Don't I? Lay that to Dane. He deserves it. Besides those plans are not for a church. If you had glanced at them with the smallest interest you would have seen that they are plans for a model tenement, dispensary and so forth in connection with our present church."

"How remarkable! May I look?" Noelle turned to the desk and bent over the drawings, Dr. Tiffany leaning back in his chair and watching her with a curiously pensive smile which said, "Assume as much interest as you will, I am not deceived. Your heart

is far from me. Still we will both play the game."

"These plans are most attractive," Noelle said presently. "But how are the plans for the new church getting on? I have heard nothing of it lately, but that is not strange."

"Not strange because you have had over much care in other directions; not strange also because there is to be no new church. The funds, as far as the donors consent, are to go for these other purposes. In general they like the scheme. The cost will be a third less."

Noelle's eyes spoke her incredulous amazement.

"Don't you think the present church good enough, Miss Motte?" with some acrimony.

"Why, yes. I always thought it was, and in the right place for the unfashionable folk, but I supposed you—"

"You supposed me wholly given over to sinful pride and worldly ambition, masquerading, a little incongruously to be sure, under the name of 'Calvary.' Well, you may not have been altogether wrong, although I wish to say that I myself found the gift of the lot by our Brother Search indigestible from the start. Hardened worldling though I am, I have my better nature also. A certain man came down from Jericho and stirred it up uncomfortably."

Noelle's eyes were wide with serious and sympathetic wonder.

"Dr. Hartlieb?" she asked after a pause.

"No wonder you name him. He has been wonder-worker-in-chief among us, hasn't he? Look at you,—suddenly free to marry the man of your choice. Look at Matthew O'Brien hard at it every day in his laboratory, 'God's in

his heaven' on his lips instead of a sneer and a welcome for even me! But it wasn't Hartlieb but Dane, the lad you love, with the Galahad look in his eyes and the shock of his boy faith in me which I had to see! He awoke the notion, more or less chimerical, that it is not yet too late for something ere the end yet to be done."

Noelle's eyes spoke unutterable things. She had risen, for the clock struck twelve.

"'Some work of noble note
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods?'

"I should think not! And there William Dane thinks you hate him!"

"And so I do," with perfect gravity.

"May I tell him so? Is he in his office? Would he mind my speaking to him a moment?" Noelle spoke with sudden shyness.

"Probably not. Run along. Don't disturb me again, if you please, Miss Motte. I have matters of importance to attend to. A minute, though! At what hour do you wish to be married? Let me mark the date on my calendar, 'lest we forget,—lest we forget!'" a small sigh under breath.

"Seven o'clock, if you please, Dr. Tiffany."

The inner door opened at Noelle's knocking. Dane appeared, a sudden flame of gladness leaping to his eyes as he saw her. Dr. Tiffany turned back to his desk.

THE END.

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Mr. Stephens has put into his new book, "Clementina's Highwayman," the finest qualities of plot, construction, and literary finish.

The story is laid in the mid-Georgian period. It is a dashing, sparkling, vivacious comedy, with a heroine as lovely and changeable as an April day, and a hero all ardor and daring.

The exquisite quality of Mr. Stephens's literary style clothes the story in a rich but delicate word-fabric; and never before have his setting and atmosphere been so perfect.

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